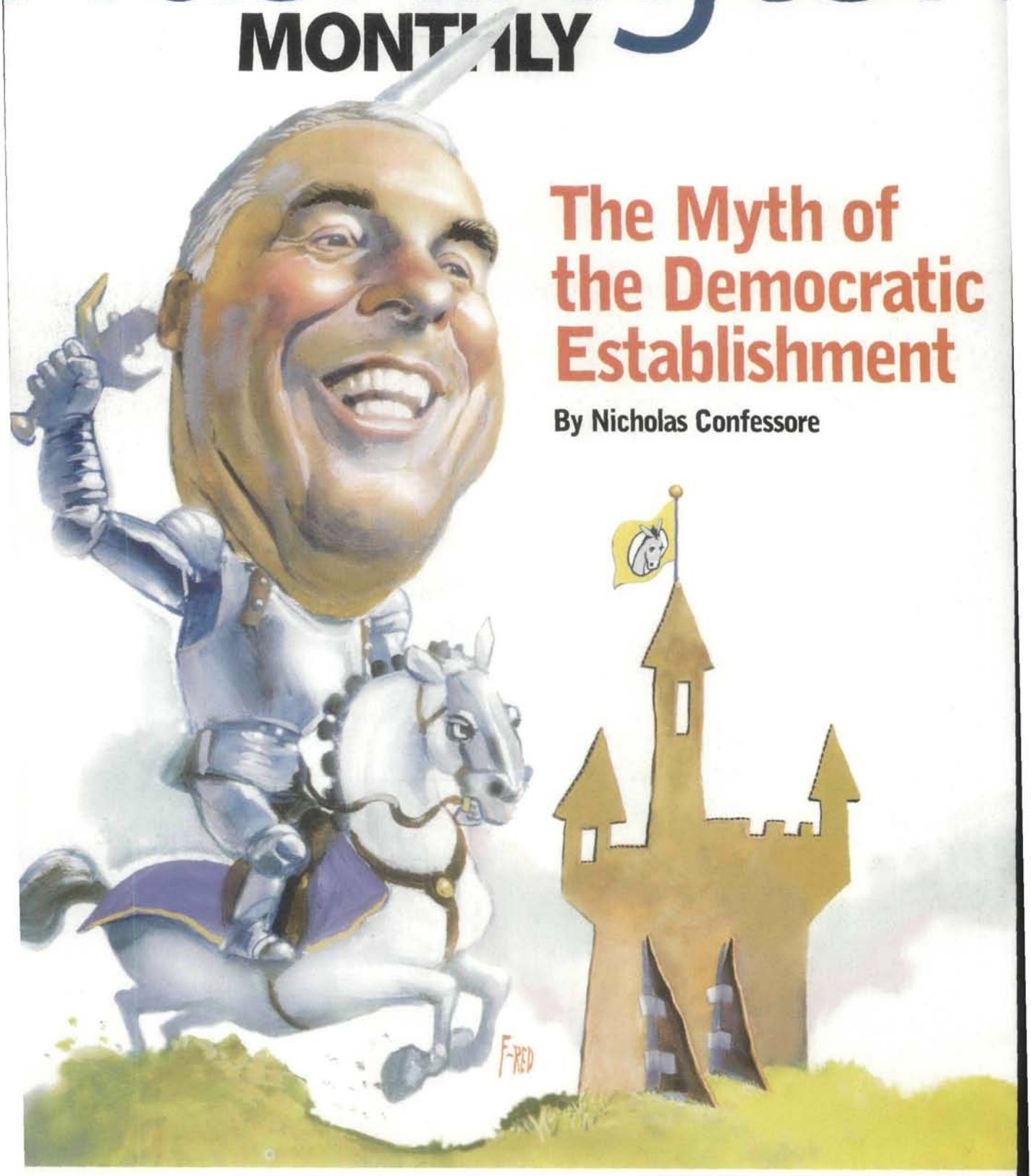
Bill Clinton's un-self-deprecating humor

Washington MONTHLY



The Myth of the Democratic Establishment

By Nicholas Confessore

Feb 2004 $4.50

Richard Florida on Bush's creative class war • Paris Hilton's middle class values • Is Laura too good for George?

Ruy Teixeira on Zell Miller • James Warren on Ken Auletta

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ısiness tough?

Take heart.

; corporate greed outrage you?

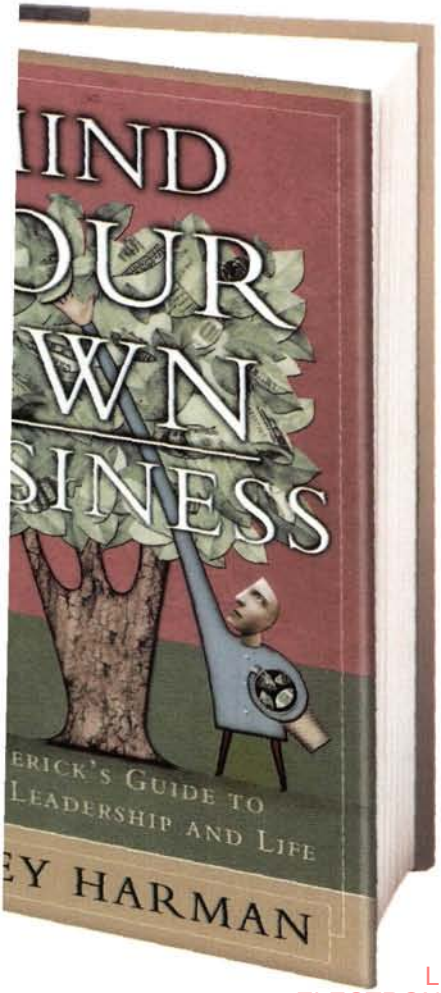
There's hope.

ıe future cloudy?

Here's some sunlight.

s life seem too short?

This will lengthen it.



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Washington MONTHLY

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January/February 2004

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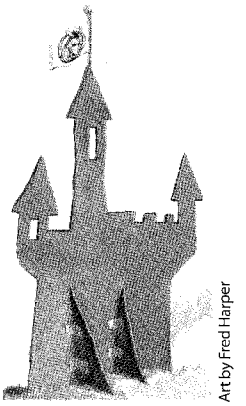
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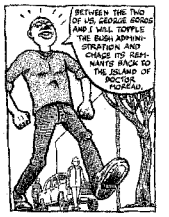

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Letters

Guarding home base

In your article, "Corps Voter" (November), and in your comments on C-SPAN's "Washington Journal," you noted that the Republican Party is perceived as the party that "supports the military." That is a myth that operates as truth. If you were to poll the American people to ask them which branch of the military service Dick Cheney had served in, I think that most would name a branch. Of course, Cheney never served; he avoided the service with educational deferments essentially the way Clinton did. Conservatives were successful at branding Clinton a "draft dodger," but the current administration has largely avoided being stigmatized in the same fashion. Amazingly, a great number of Republican hawks never served in the U.S. military in their lives.

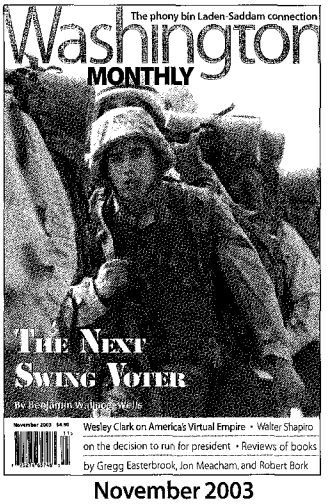
Harold Weber
Oceanside, Calif.

I read with interest your hypothesis that the military may bolt the Republican Party in the aftermath of the Iraq war. Having worked for the military for over 25 years, I think some of your suppositions are a tad out of touch. I hear on a daily basis how wonderful George W. Bush's administration is. The military I work for continually lauds the job done by this president.

In essence, the military vote their pocketbook; as long as they think (rightly or wrongly) that Republicans will give them better salaries and privileges, they will solidly stay in the ranks of the Republican Party. I respect and admire some military, but they are just as fallible and human as anyone else, no better no worse.

The modern military has very little loyalty to anything but their bottom line; in that way, they are no different than the majority of workers in this country. Many GIs joined the military because it is a family business, passed down from fathers to sons and daughters; the salary and job security seem good (until a war is called). Yes, there are some gung-ho, enlisted loyal-to-the-core types, but in my experience, they are few and far between.

Barbara Schuler
A Civ 74 MDOS/SGO
Via email



November 2003

"If you were to poll the American people to ask them which branch of the military service Dick Cheney had served in, I think that most would name a branch. Of course, Cheney never served."
—Harold Weber

This is a very well-written article. However, one important issue affecting troop morale has been overlooked: the heavy usage of civilian contractors. The dirtiest, most dangerous jobs are reserved for the lower ranking (and lower paid) enlisted troops. Less dangerous jobs are given to civilians who make more money and can go home pretty much whenever they want to. When the civilian janitors and cooks make more than the GIs dodging the bullets, more than a few of those GIs are bound to be tempted to rethink their career choice. It's also hard to understand why hiring civilian contractors is a good deal for the U.S. taxpayer, but hiring more troops is too expensive.

As for concurrent receipt, I do not understand why Republicans are so determined to block relief for disabled veterans. I retired without any disabilities, so the concurrent receipt issue doesn't affect me personally, but I am appalled by the betrayal of my fellow veterans. The $5 billion per year price tag could easily be paid for by slightly rolling back recent tax breaks on dividends. For that matter, partially rolling back tax breaks on dividends and on the upper tax brackets would allow us to pay for rebuilding Afghanistan and Iraq, rather than pushing the debt on to our children. As a fiscal conservative who is careful to live within her means, I am not one bit happy with the new Republican Party.

Linda Allen
USAF Retired
Corpus Christi, Texas

I am a lifelong Democrat, my husband a registered Republican, but both our political views are progressive. We raised our children in this atmosphere and hoped that both would espouse our beliefs. My daughter, thankfully, shares our views. My son, however, went to West Point. He is a career Army officer who has just recently returned from Iraq. He's intelligent, articulate, and a leader admired by those he commands as well as by his superiors. We're very proud of him, but the Army made him a Republican.

Thank you for your balanced and thought-provoking commentary. Now, I can see the reasons why the military has believed that Republicans best represent their interests. I hope that you're correct that the tide is changing. I'm forwarding this article to my son. It can't hurt.

Loretta Knorr
Via email

Light and Clark

Wesley Clark's article, "America's Virtual Empire," (November) is a stunning piece of work, laying out

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the historical roots of decades of multilateralist success. While citing this administration's failures abroad, he describes the potentially enormous damage that Bush's arrogant, unilateralist policies could do to U.S. interests in the long run. He makes a powerful case that our current foreign policy will only hasten a decline in our influence in the world, leading to an inevitable loss of U.S. economic stability and global authority. We need this man to hold an important place in a post-Bush administration.

Anne Spurgeon
Madison, Wisc.

The way in which Wesley Clark's article places our current predicament in Iraq in correct historical context—and therefore gives a clearer vision of where our current direction will take us—is outstanding. It is obvious to my eyes that America would be in a stronger, more secure position, and in a more peaceful world with Wes Clark as our president.

Paul Smirl
Dana Point, Calif.

Cracks in the foundation

Regarding Charles Peters's "Tilting at Windmills" (November) item on the lawsuit by William Robertson and his sisters against Princeton University: The plaintiffs are not asking "to get back" the $525 million in the Robertson Foundation kitty. They are asking for control of the Robertson Foundation and its funds so they can donate the money to programs and/or individuals at other colleges and universities that take the Robertson Foundation's "government service" mission seriously.

Last month, the Robertson Foundation's university trustees voted—over the unanimous objections of the family trustees—to subsume the Robertson Foundation's investments into the university endowment fund, known as the Princeton Investment Company (PrinCo). When they set up the foundation in 1961, Charles and Marie Robertson did so in a manner intended to ensure that the foundation's funds would not be comingled with Princeton's. So much for "donor intent."

Herb Berkowitz
Wilmington, N.C.

Norwich hunt

Kirby Schroeder's article "Hard Corps" (October) dangerously refuses to place blame where blame belongs in rape cases. Schroeder does not blame Cadet "Garcia" for raping a fellow cadet, writing: "I am certain he thought he had not done anything unusual … I can imagine [Garcia] deeply confused as they escorted him away from committing a sexual assault."

Instead of blaming the individual, Schroeder places blame on the entire male population of Norwich. I called a good friend of mine at Norwich to find out if males "teach each other by example it is okay to approach an unconscious … woman and attempt to have sex with her," as Schroeder claims. My friend's tone became quite serious as he expressed complete disbelief at that statement. While sexual relations at military academies are troubled, there is no widespread acceptance of rape at Norwich. Even if there were, Cadet "Garcia" would still be personally responsible. No matter how re-socialized a cadet is at a military academy, there is a basic line of integrity that every human, especially a member of the military should recognize. Taking sexual advantage of a passed-out, inebriated woman is beyond that line. Personal responsibility is a fundamental value in the military. I appreciate Mr. Schroeder's attempt to look for a preventative solution, but he misses the mark by not explicitly condemning Cadet "Garcia."

Peter D. Minnar
Chapel Hill, N.C.

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Tilting at **Windmills**

by **Charles Peters**, founding editor

Guerrillas in the missed

Just imagine how eagerly Condoleezza Rice and Don Rumsfeld must have anticipated The History Channel's new documentary, "Nazi Guerrillas," which the cable blurb described as "revealing the post-World War II Nazi loyalists who used guerrilla tactics to halt reconstruction." Surely, here would be the proof that they were right when they said that the Germans had terrorized U.S. troops just as the Iraqis are doing today, with the implication that this would not prevent the triumph of democracy in Iraq any more than it had in Germany. Unhappily, their hopes were dashed. The show's first half was about what Nazi guerrillas did while the war was still on. In the post-war period, a few bombs appear to have exploded, but in marked contrast to Iraq, only one U.S. soldier was killed. The documentary's conclusion was that, whatever resistance existed was "quiet," "passive," and mostly designed to keep the allies from finding out who had been a Nazi.

High and mighty

Did you know that in 1970 the United States had the world's lowest rate of traffic fatalities? Guess where we rank now. Eighth. We were still second lowest in 1985. What has been the big change since then? Could it be the SUV?

Green Zone blues

For seven years, I traveled extensively around the Third World visiting Peace Corps programs. One of the most consistent complaints of our volunteers concerned the tendency of other Americans to live together in compounds, isolated from the people of the country in which they were living. Whatever social contact they had with the locals was usually confined to the elite. There were, however, some brave exceptions to this rule, an occasional foreign service officer or CIA agent who would break out of the compound. Alas, even those exceptions do not seem to be present in Baghdad, where Americans are confined to a "Green Zone," four square miles surrounded by concrete walls and barbed wire.

Those who are supposed to work among the Iraqis or who simply want to find out what's going on out there face a daunting prospect: "Forms must be filled out explaining the reason for the outing, requesting transportation and a protective detail," reports *The Washington Post*'s Ariana Eunjung Cha.

Inside the barricade is a Little America, with Monday Night Football, hamburgers, pizza, swimming pools, a new gym, and joggers running down the streets. And at Little America's heart, incongruously, is Saddam Hussein's Republican Palace, with its "marble hallways and velvet chaises."

To put it gently, the zone is not conducive to getting to know the average Iraqi, much less win his heart and mind. "The Americans are behind the walls in the palace. They have difficulty knowing what's going on. I call it the Green Area Syndrome," one AID contractor told the *Post*. "You want to feel like you're of the people, but when you are here, there are rules and you can't go out and you can't talk to them. You are isolated," added an interpreter.

The decline of public television

What has happened to educational television? Three of the 10 most popular shows on PBS last year were from Suze Orman's "How to Get Rich" series. Then on Sunday Dec. 7, both the Maryland and Washington, D.C., public television stations featured "The Brain Beauty Connection," described as "Nicholas Perricone offers advice on skin problems, including acne, wrinkles and sagging skin." What comes next? No doubt a foot surgeon will advise ladies on how to shape their feet to fit fashionable footwear.

Custom-made boat

Two years ago, Congress gave the Washington area $324 million for an anti-terrorism project. Three *Washington Post* reporters looked into how it had been spent:

"The district funded a popular jobs program, outfitted police with leather jackets, and assessed environmental problems on property primed for redevelopment. In Virginia, a small volunteer fire department spent $350,000 on a custom-made fire boat. The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments used some of the money for janitorial service. In Maryland, the money is buying Prince George's County prosecutors an office security system." It's those Prince George's County prosecutors that you know are the terrorists' prime targets.

This kind of article is done far too infrequently. Too often the press—and therefore the ordinary citizen—accepts the passage of a bill which purports to solve a problem as actually solving it. That is very often far from what actually happens. That's why I call the passage of the bill "make-believe." What counts is how it is implemented.

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Lemon squeezer

Another example of the kind of "what happens after the bill passed" reporting that I admire comes from the *Charleston Gazette*, which has looked at what happened to a program to provide cars to people trying to get off welfare and go to work. The purpose is laudable. Practically every study of welfare recipients has shown that lack of transportation is a serious obstacle to their getting and holding jobs.

In West Virginia, the reporters found that the program is working just as intended for some people, but they also found that quite a few of "the state's poorest citizens received cars with seat belts that didn't latch, mufflers that dropped off, and steering wheels that fell into their laps ... Agency officials set up deals with used car dealers who sold, repaired, and towed the same cars, giving them an incentive to sell lemons." The lemons would have to be towed, giving them that profit in addition to the one on the sale. And then its repairs would produce still more profit. One dealer made nearly $1 million from the program.

Sex in the city

Speaking of Bill Clinton, remember how he was vilified for the Chinese connections of some of his associates? It now seems that George W. Bush may have an embarrassment of his own. His brother Neil, according to *Reuters*, has a deal with a corporation backed by highly placed Chinese that will pay him $2 million over five years. The company's business is semiconductors. A lawyer, inquiring as to why the company would be willing to pay so much for his services, asked Neil Bush:

"You have absolutely no educational background in semiconductors, do you?"

"That's correct," was the reply.

Neil, whom you may recall for his front-man involvement with the notorious Silverado Savings & Loan, was asked whether he knew that the numerous Asian women who were offering him sex were prostitutes. He replied that he did not, that they had not asked for money.

"You have to admit that its pretty remarkable for a man just to go to a hotel room door and open it and have a woman standing there and have sex with him?"

"It was very unusual," Bush replied.

Monday, bloody Monday

American bombs killed nine children in an Afghan village which we bombed because a single suspected terrorist was reported to be there. *The New York Times* ran this story on page 1, on the same day, Dec. 8, that *The Washington Post* put it on page 16. It seems to me that the *Times* was right, and the *Post* wrong. The story is a perfect illustration of the tragedy that results from using overkill in the pursuit of bad guys, a problem that we now see on a much wider scale in Iraq.

One wonders if the *Post* made this mistake, as it had made similar errors of news judgment on a good many Monday mornings, because the Monday paper is put out by the skeletal second team which works on weekends. Or was it downplayed because the editor making the decision was a member of the *Post*'s hawkish faction? One can't help noticing that some days the *Post* seems to be out to expose the errors of Bush's foreign policy. But on other days, front-page stories and op-ed pieces seem to have been dictated by Paul Wolfowitz.

Discharged linguists

But I should credit the *Post* for recently putting on its front page

NOC, NOC

You may have been puzzled when I referred earlier to the "occasional CIA officer" who had the enterprise to break out of the embassy. Weren't all CIA people out there spying on someone? The fact is that usually it's been mostly the NOCs who were "out there." NOC means non-official cover, which in turn means the spies who are really spies, as in Kim, operating without diplomatic immunity, their covers ranging from street-sweeper to businessman. The trouble is that NOCs—Valerie Plame was one—have been a small minority of agency operatives abroad. Most of them work under diplomatic cover and —as this magazine explained long ago ("Murder by the Book," by James Fallows, April 1976)—are absurdly easy for foreign intelligence agencies to spot. Because they become part of the diplomatic community, they and their spouses tend to become preoccupied with the internal affairs of embassy life, including perks, to the detriment of their work outside.

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the story, reported here several months ago, of how the Pentagon stupidly discharged fluent Arabic speakers simply because they were gay, even though they were desperately needed by our forces in Iraq. The *Post*'s Anne Hull found Kathleen Glover working in Washington for a swimming-pool maintenance company, "skimming leaves and testing chlorine levels." She had been trained in Arabic at the Defense Language Institute in Monterrey, Calif., but she was, like 37 other linguists, discharged for homosexuality.

Bad bills

My friend the columnist Matthew Miller condemns the Democrats who voted against the prescription drug bill but opposed the filibuster which could have defeated it—Joe Biden, Jon Corzine, Tom Daschle, Mark Dayton, Tim Johnson, Herb Kohl, Barbara Mikulski, Patty Murray, Bill Nelson, Mark Pryor, and Harry Reid. Such votes do seem inconsistent, but there are some very good guys in that group and I have some sympathy for their position. It was a bad bill. But refusing to let it become law would have kept the Congress from declaring that prescription drugs should be part of Medicare. That is, in itself, an historic step.

As a former legislator, I understand the desirability of getting laws that take such steps on the books. You can then fight to fix their imperfections. As a member of the West Virginia House of Delegates, I co-sponsored with Sen. Paul Kaufman a bill establishing the state's Human Rights Commission. As the bill passed, the commission was toothless. But it did assume for the state a responsibility for the human rights of its citizens. That crucial first step was taken. Later, I understand that teeth were added and that the commission did considerable good.

What has happened to educational television? On Sunday, Dec. 7, both the Maryland and Washington, D.C., public television stations featured "The Brain Beauty Connection," described as "Nicholas Perricone offers advice on skin problems, acne, wrinkles and sagging skin." What comes next? No doubt a foot surgeon will advise ladies on how to shape their feet to fit fashionable footwear.

The prescription drug bill may yet turn out like the human rights bill—if the Democrats campaign to correct what is wrong with it. They have a powerful case that, in my opinion, will win them lots of votes. The same principle applies to what I think should be the other main concerns of the campaign—education and terrorism. Just as on prescription drugs, the Republicans have taken actions that sound good but really aren't. The Democrats can make hay by clearly pointing out what's wrong with the GOP policies and saying what they would do instead.

Wise words

Moshe Yaalon recently told journalists that, in the words of *The Washington Post*'s Molly Moore, "Israel's military tactics against the Palestinian population were too repressive and were fomenting explosive levels of 'hatred and terrorism'... Crackdowns, curfews, and roadblocks in the West Bank and Gaza Strip were crippling the lives of innocent Palestinians, and that the military's tactics were now threatening Israel's own interests."

How were Israel's interests being hurt? By "increasing hatred for Israel and strengthening terrorist organizations." Wise words to which I hope Israeli hawks and their American counterparts will attend. They just might, because Moshe Yaalon is not some gutless dove. He's a general and the chief of staff of Israel's armed forces.

President pothole

Although I like all of them better than Bush, I still haven't made up my mind about which Democratic candidate to support. Gephardt strikes me as the nicest guy, the one I'd most like to have as a friend, but he's far too much of an old liberal. Joe Lieberman is the second nicest guy, and I love his sense of humor, but he's sounding more and more like Zell Miller. I admire Kerry for his service in Vietnam, the bravery he demonstrated while there, and his fight to end the war when he came home. Unfortunately, he totally lacks Gephardt's human appeal. Howard Dean has been great on the war in Iraq. He's too arrogant, but he's my first choice as of now. John Edwards is my friend Walter Shapiro's dark horse, and mine too, despite his dismaying lack of government experience. Wesley Clark would be my bet to win if he didn't keep interrupting impressive appearances with odd statements, as when he was explaining how he mastered domestic issues while he was commanding an Army base:

"I owned every pothole. I made sure they had the right kind of underwear in the commissary."

Turkey day

The administration continues

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its mad rush to strip consumers of the slim protections left after three years of Bush. The latest example is, appropriately enough, turkeys. In 2002, the Food Safety and Inspection Service of the Department of Agriculture identified which turkey producers had failed salmonella tests. For example, nearly half the turkeys at ConAgra's Longmont, Colo., plant tested positive.

So as Thanksgiving 2003 approached, consumer advocates asked the department for the results of the latest testing. But according to *The Washington Post*'s Cindy Skrzycki, no answers came. Why so? Because they had decided to stop testing, which prompted one consumer advocate to ask, "Who is the turkey at USDA that stopped testing turkeys?"

Getting on the bus

Partly because I was fascinated by trains as a child and, more rationally, because, for many years, trains were obviously environmentally preferable to buses, I have long had a pro-rail, anti-bus bias. Now, however, we have buses running on natural gas, and metropolitan areas that have sprawled in a way that often makes rail an impractical solution. It's time to abandon my prejudice. Buses are a lot cheaper. They can also serve a variety of routes that do not attract enough riders to fill a train but would fill a bus.

Loser identity

In West Virginia, nearly half of the homicides are committed by a spouse or by a domestic partner. About 80 percent of the fatalities in these cases involve guns.

These facts make a compelling argument for gun control. Few politicians present this case. Looking at what happened to Al Gore, they don't want the same thing to happen to them. Their fear is far from groundless; an amazing half of all the state's households have guns.

"Many West Virginians own guns because they grew up with them," explains the *Charleston Daily Mail*, to which I'm indebted for the foregoing facts. "And in a state where law enforcement can take a long time to arrive, people are accustomed to keeping the means to mount an effective self-defense."

If you've ever flown over West Virginia, you must have noticed how the state is divided by mountains and hills into a series of valleys, the narrowest of which are called hollows. If you live at one end and the sheriff is at another, your 911 call is not going to be answered quickly. Another factor not mentioned by the *Daily Mail* is that West Virginians love to hunt. I remember how eagerly my father looked forward to joining his brothers each fall to hunt quail in their native Monroe County. (A travel tip—the view from the top of Oak Hill Cemetery outside the county seat, Union, is one of the loveliest you'll ever see.)

The point is, though there are many arguments that make those who resist gun control seem stupid, and even immoral, the fact is that in a state like West Virginia, gun ownership is a custom so thoroughly grounded in tradition that it is not likely to be uprooted soon.

As I was working on this item, I glanced up and saw one of those bulletins running across the bottom of the CNN news that runs every half hour. It said "Democrat Gavin Newsom elected SF Mayor: favors abortion, gun control and gay marriage." I agree with Howard Dean that this is not the party identity that is going to spell victory next November.

Home shopping

My wife and I have lived in the same house for 42 years. When my mother died a few years ago, she had lived in hers for 55. But the average American homeowner buys a new house every six years, according to a recent article by Motoko Rich in *The New York Times*. Less than 10 percent have lived in the same house for more than 30 years. Indeed, a stunning 20 percent report having just moved into their homes within the last 15 months. It looks as if buying a house has become as casual as buying a car. When people go off to grandma's for Thanksgiving, they'd better call to find out the address.

Material issue

The second smart step to take in the war against terrorism, after going into Afghanistan to overthrow Osama bin Laden's Taliban protectors and disrupt al Qaeda, was not to invade Iraq, which didn't have weapons of mass destruction, but to secure the dangerous weapons that did exist and which the terrorists might acquire. But as Sam Nunn, the former U.S. senator who has led the world effort to meet this problem, tells *Reuters*, "the war in Iraq had distracted the United States and diverted resources from securing unconventional weapons materials in regions like the former Soviet Union."

Most of the material is in the former Soviet Union. But the danger is considerably wider. For example, there are some 100 poorly protected research reactors spread around the world in some 40 countries, "containing … usable uranium." Add to this *Reuters* report this news from *The Washington Post*: "There have been dozens of cases of trafficking in radiological materials over the past three years, along with what some weapons experts describe as a disturbing new trend…a surge of interest among criminal groups. . . . Gangs have stalked and stolen radiological devices to sell for

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profit or to use in crimes ranging from extortion to murder."

Cruise control

Why haven't conservatives endorsed gay marriage? It would seem to be an answer to the reckless promiscuity that, especially among males, is the most serious moral problem of the gay community and, when the sex is unprotected—as it increasingly is among young men—all too likely to spread AIDS, which is exactly what is happening right now. HIV infection, which had been declining in the 1990s, rose 17 percent among men having sex with other men between 1999 and 2002, according to a recent survey reported by Anahad O'Connor in *The New York Times*.

I'm therefore delighted to report that at least one conservative, David Brooks, supports gay marriage. "The conservative course is not to banish gay people from making such commitments, it is to expect that they make such commitments. We shouldn't just allow gay marriage. We should insist on gay marriage."

Secretive police

Franz Kafka would love this one. The U.S. Park Police Chief, Teresa Chambers, recently told reporters that she needs reinforcements. Her forces are being stretched too thin by their new responsibilities to provide security for conspicuous terrorist targets like the Washington Monument. Instead of getting more money, however, she anticipates a $12 million budget shortfall this year. Sounds to me like she has reasonable concerns. But Dan Murphy, the Bush administration's deputy chief of Park Service, has removed Chambers from her job and placed her on administrative leave, saying that she had violated rules against lobbying and commenting on pending budget matters.

When reporters asked the Park Service for copies of the rules Chambers is supposed to have broken, a spokesman said: "We're not willing to discuss this." The Park Service has also refused to tell Chambers's lawyer what rules she broke or how she broke them.

The old gang back in Prague couldn't have handled it better.

Corn syrup

I've been a fan of Jim Lehrer for years. I like Margaret Warner, Gwen Ifill, Ray Suarez, and the rest of the gang. I do, however, have a beef. It is their failure to take on ethanol, the fuel made from corn. Recently in a segment about the pending energy bill, there was not even a hint that there might be something wrong with the bill's enormous subsidy for ethanol. Indeed, the program treated the preservation of that subsidy as a justification for the grant of immunity to the notorious MTBE, a fuel additive which, in the words of *The Wall Street Journal*'s Alan Murray, has "an unfortunate tendency to leech into the groundwater," posing a threat to public health.

Ethanol is a major product of Archer Daniels Midland, a principal sponsor of Lehrer's show. It seems to me that fact should have been noted in the energy segment, as should the fact that ethanol is a net energy loser, requiring more energy to make than it provides, and that most energy experts think neither it nor MTBE is now needed.

The importance of being curious

Reporters covering Howard Dean have noticed that he never asks them questions. Paul Krugman thinks this betrays their self-importance, which is certainly a possibility. My worry, however, is that it reflects a lack of curiosity on Dean's part. Great presidents are insatiably curious. FDR was always asking questions. And think of Jack Kennedy dealing with his greatest challenge, the Cuban missile crisis, constantly probing his colleagues for information and advice. Also, it helps to like reporters, as Kennedy and FDR did, enough to take an interest in them and what they think. This affection tends to be returned, resulting in more sympathetic coverage.

Gandhi the capitulator

I understand why conservatives get mad when they see war protesters attacking the United States but not Saddam Hussein or Osama bin Laden. I also get upset when the protesters suggest that war is wrong, period. I think we were right in going after Osama when the Taliban refused to surrender him after 9/11. Sometimes war is necessary. The clearest example is the war against Hitler. I'm now doing research on that period for a book on Wendell Willkie, and came across a story from the June 23, 1940, *New York Herald Tribune*. France had just surrendered, leaving Britain to stand alone against Hitler. The story quoted Mohandas K. Gandhi as praising the French for what they had done. "I think French officials showed great courage … the greater bravery of suing for peace." He believed that the occupation of France would give Hitler "not the pleasure of having an empire, but the burden of sustaining its crushing weight." In the long run, he might have been right, but in the short term, millions of Jews, among many others, lost their lives.

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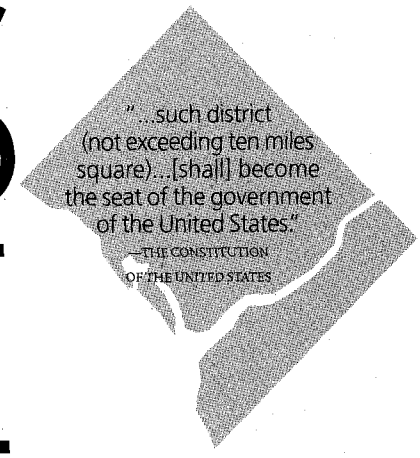
10 MILES SQUARE



If At First

Why Washington political operatives will be voting for Howard Dean.

By Christina Larson

Spend a few days tramping around the site of the first Democratic primary contest of the election '04 season, and you'll find it's not shaping up quite the way one might expect. The local press isn't sponsoring any pre-primary debates. Front yards aren't thick with campaign signs. And instead of flocking here to press the flesh with voters, most of the major Democratic presidential aspirants are doing nothing to turn out the vote in this state—which is not actually a state, at least not yet.

Indeed, when the polls open in Washington, D.C., on January 13, the only national Democratic candidates on the ballot will be Carol Moseley Braun, Dennis Kucinich, Al Sharpton, and Howard Dean. This is a rather disconcerting fact for the legions of D.C.-based political operatives who won't be able to vote for the favorite candidates of the Democratic establishment, such as Sen. John Kerry (D-Mass.), Sen. Joe Lieberman (D-Conn.) and Sen. John Edwards (D-N.C.), whom many inside the Beltway have been supporting and advising over the past year.

It's also frustrating to Jack Evans, a D.C. City Councilmember who represents the Georgetown neighborhood where Kerry, Lieberman, and Edwards all own homes. Like so many of the District's elected officials, Evans—a fiftyish, tow-headed lawyer dubbed "the Boy Blonde" by the local alternative newspaper—is forever looking for ways to bring attention to D.C.'s ongoing quest for voting representation in Congress. And last spring, from his office on Pennsylvania Avenue between the Capitol and the White House, Evans began to act on a moment of inspiration.

Reading through the Democratic National Committee's delegate-selection rules, Evans found a loophole in the language that, in effect, ensures that the first caucus and the first primary of each election year are held in Iowa and New Hampshire. These rules prohibit any other state from moving its presidential primary before the first Tuesday in February. But the District of Columbia, Evans reasoned, isn't a state. So he drafted a bill, passed last spring by the city council, which moved D.C.'s primary to January 13, six days before the Iowa caucuses and two weeks before New Hampshire's primary. By luring the candidates to campaign in Washington, Evans hoped he could "showcase D.C.'s lack of voting representation in Congress."

But his machinations have not played out quite as planned. Last September, New Hampshire's Democratic state party chair, Kathleen Sullivan, eager to preserve her state's pre-eminence in presidential selection, complained to *The Washington Times* that D.C. was trying to "manipulate or dodge DNC rules" and warned darkly of a backlash by Granite state voters against any candidate who campaigned in the D.C. primary. In defense of the existing primary order, DNC chair Terry McAuliffe threatened not to seat D.C. delegates at next summer's Democratic convention. Evans and his colleagues refused to budge, so McAuliffe, whose offices are also in Washington, brokered a

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Solomonic compromise: D.C. would be allowed to hold the nation's first primary, so long as its results were non-binding.

Not surprisingly, most of the major Democratic candidates, wary of offending voters in Iowa and New Hampshire, chose not to campaign vigorously in the District. Hoping to force their hands, Evans got another law passed in October to require that the names of all declared national candidates appear on the ballot, unless they opted out in writing. To Evans' chagrin, that's just what most did.

In early November, the letters began to arrive at the District's Board of Elections and Ethics office. "I must regretfully and formally ask you not to place my name on the ... ballot," read one note, signed by Edwards. Sen. Richard Gephardt (D-Mo.) asked that the board "withdraw my name from the D.C. presidential primary ballot," while retired Gen. Wesley Clark requested that his "name not be included." Similar entreaties—each regretfully citing DNC rules discouraging participation in non-binding primaries—were sent from the offices of Lieberman and Kerry.

For D.C. residents, this was hardly the desired result. Evans places blame primarily on the candidates who withdrew for their "collective act of gutlessness," the kind of bowing and scraping to the Democratic establishment, such as it is, that has provoked so many primary voters to abandon early favorites like Kerry and Lieberman to support the rebel Howard Dean. Ironically, it's the establishment candidates themselves who will pay the heaviest price for their caution. Since Dean was the only major candidate with the guts to keep his name on the D.C. ballot, polls show he's likely to win the primary handily. And with that victory—in the establishment's own backyard—he'll probably be headed into Iowa and New Hampshire with a modest but animating extra touch of momentum.

Christina Larson is the managing editor of *The Washington Monthly.*

The Washington Monthly's

Monthly Journalism Award

David Willman

"Stealth Merger"

Los Angeles Times

December 7, 2003

In a comprehensive, 12,000-word story that took a year to assemble, *Los Angeles Times* reporter David Willman examines the conflicts of interest of National Institutes of Health scientists. With increasing frequency, Willman's report, "Stealth Merger," found, these researchers charged with running the clinical trials to determine whether drugs are safe are also paid consultants of the pharmaceutical companies which produce the same drugs. Willman raises disturbing questions about whether deaths that happened during clinical trials run by these researchers might have been avoided, and the trials stopped earlier, if the scientists had not also been on the drug companies' payrolls.

The Monthly Journalism Award is presented each month to one or more newspaper, magazine, radio or television stories (or series of stories) that demonstrate a commitment to the public interest. We are particularly interested in reporting that explains the successes and failures of government agencies at all levels and of other institutions such as the media, corporations, unions, and foundations that contribute to the existence or solution of public problems. Please send nominations (including a copy of the article or broadcast text) to The Washington Monthly Journalism Award, 733 15th Street, NW, Suite 520, Washington, DC 20005. Or email us at editors@washingtonmonthly.com.

Senior Moment

How America's biggest interest group misjudged its grassroots.

By Zachary Roth

"I hope you get cancer and die, you little scumbag." Michael Naylor found that message on his voicemail when he walked into his Washington office one morning last November. It was an early sign that perhaps he and his organization had made a mistake.

A graying, bespectacled man with the pleasant, genial demeanor of a school-teacher, Naylor is the chief lobbyist for the AARP, the organization formerly known as the American Association of Retired Persons. A Republican-backed plan to add prescription drug coverage to Medicare had just been passed by Congress, after a crucial endorsement from AARP.

The endorsement drew howls of outrage from many Democrats and long-time AARP supporters. 20,000 AARP members quit the organization in disgust (although some ultimately decided merely to suspend their membership when given that option). And in an event that made national news, a group of retired union members gathered outside AARP's massive headquarters on E Street and set fire to their membership cards.

When I met with Naylor a few weeks later, he pointed out that it was raining that day and

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that the cards are coated in plastic, making it next to impossible to actually burn them—but the demonstrators had made their point. "We went and invited them in," Naylor told me. "I said 'Look, we've got some coffee, why don't we sit down and discuss it?'" The demonstrators huddled with their leaders, then declined the offer. Congressional Democrats, longtime allies of AARP, have been no more conciliatory. 85 House Democrats publicly quit AARP or swore not to join, and House Democratic leader Nancy Pelosi declared that the organization was "in the pocket" of Republicans— quite an about-face for an organization that Trent Lott derided only last year as "a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Democratic Party."

AARP leaders insist that endorsing the bill, and handing President Bush a huge legislative victory, was the right decision. The group's dues-paying members "wanted something to happen," says John Rother, AARP's director of policy. Aware that the chance wasn't likely to come again for the foreseeable future, the group wasn't going to walk away from the $400 billion that GOP leaders had put on the table. "It was our top legislative priority for five years," adds Rother.

The question, however, is whether AARP's members wanted *this* bill. The GOP legislation provides generous drug benefits for lower-income Americans who aren't poor enough to qualify for Medicaid, and catastrophic care for everyone. But for the vast bulk of seniors—in particular, for most members of the AARP—the benefits are very modest. So, where did all that $400 billion go? Around 22 percent goes to subsidies for corporations to encourage them not to drop whatever drug-coverage plans they already have, although the General Accounting Office has predicted that many of the firms will drop such benefits anyway. There's another $14.5 billion (or almost 4 percent) to lure HMOs to compete with Medicare for patients. The bill also locks in high drug prices by forbidding the government to bargain for discounts, which means the funding that does remain buys less coverage than it otherwise might.

"This wasn't a choice between this bill and the perfect bill," Naylor says. "It was a choice between what we could get in this bill, or nothing." But there is a little more to it than that. Over the past three years, President Bush and the GOP have made it abundantly clear to interest groups that they must support key Republican proposals to get a seat at the negotiating table on future legislation. And AARP has had plenty of occasions to get that message. AARP C.E.O. Bill Novelli is a longtime associate of former House Speaker Newt Gingrich, and in fact wrote an introduction to Gingrich's recent book on health care. Novelli, who worked on Richard Nixon's 1972 reelection campaign, is a founder of the P.R. firm Porter Novelli, which crafted the "Harry and Louise" ads that helped sink Bill Clinton's health-care reform in the early 1990s. In the run-up to the bill, Novelli kept in constant contact with House Speaker Dennis Hastert and Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist.

AARPers believed, they say, that their members supported the bill. But in fact, the group was largely flying blind. Sitting next to Naylor on the conference table was a stack of papers about eight inches high—the 681-page final bill. Gesturing towards it, Naylor argued that ordinary AARP members could hardly be expected to understand everything in there. Because the bill was so complex—and because it was a work in progress, constantly changing as negotiations progressed on Capitol Hill—the polling, focus groups, and anecdotal feedback that AARP used to ascertain their members' stance asked only about specific aspects of the legislation, rather than the bill as a whole. That left AARP leaders trying to piece together their members' attitudes, without a clear idea of the level of support for the final version. But it has since become apparent how seniors really feel: Most polls now show that Americans 55 and over disapprove of the bill by wide margins. "We didn't expect the attacks on us," admits John Rother.

It's hard to argue that the group's endorsement was not, at the very least, a public relations debacle. Officially, AARP has not reversed its position on the Medicare bill. But in an effort not to further anger its traditional allies, the group recently pulled out of a White House-sponsored series of town-hall meetings to promote Social Security privatization—a decision which, in turn, did not please the Bush administration. AARP may be the biggest lobbying group in Washington, but these days it seems to have very few friends.

Zachary Roth is a *Washington Monthly* intern.

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The Price is Right

Bomb-resistant trashcans, cultural diversity training, and other tools to rebuild Iraq.

By Jai Singh

At first glance, the war profiteers looked more like Rotarians. When I walked into the Sheraton National Hotel, just a stone's throw from the Pentagon, the posh lobby was packed with dozens of nondescript, amiable, middle-aged men, most of them slapping someone on the back, exchanging business cards, or chatting enthusiastically on a cell phone. "Look, just ask them to tell us what they're lookin' to pay," one business-suited man barked into his phone. Another man with a Southern accent, talked about a client, potential partner, or hire. "I wanna say he went to Chile, but it might have been one of those other countries." Another guy, lounging near the bar, recalled the hotel before its recent multi-million dollar renovation. If he knew it had improved so much, he told me, he would have brought the kids.

Like me, they were here to attend a 2-day conference on "Rebuilding Iraq." In the months since Congress allocated more than $18 billion in U.S. taxpayer dollars for reconstruction projects in the newly-liberated country, the Baghdad-based Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) has been taking bids on everything from mobile hydraulic cranes to amberlite resins to Iraqi army uniforms. The conference organizers, New Fields Exhibitions, Inc., had promised a "one-stop-shop for success in Iraq." And if the scene in the lobby didn't exactly conjure up images of instability and violence, the products being pitched certainly did.

One stack of brochures on the registration table advertised bomb-resistant trashcans, each available in colors ranging from windswept copper to lapis blue, and capable of containing the explosion of a pipe bomb. (I had already missed the demonstration, held one day earlier). Another company specialized in refitting sport utility vehicles with armor plate and bulletproof glass, making them invulnerable to small arms fire. The Overseas Private Investment Corporation had set out information packets about its political insurance policies, aimed at those firms worried about having their assets expropriated by the future Iraqi government. The delivery-services company DHL, a major sponsor of "Rebuilding Iraq," didn't have much traffic at their table. I asked their representative about the DHL plane that got shot down just a few weeks prior to the conference. "It was an old plane anyway," he said.

The vicissitudes of federal government contracting, it turns out, apply beyond U.S. borders. One entrepreneur, a burly fellow named Richard, explained with a Southern twang that his business—which provides support staff for the CPA—gets preferential treatment because he's part Cherokee. After some small talk, I got ready to leave. "You going back?" he asked.

"Yeah," I said. "I've got a 5 o'clock meeting."

Surveying my dark skin once again, he said. "No, I mean to Baghdad." I'm not Iraqi, I explained. I'm Indian American. "Oh, I got a bunch of Indians working for me in Qatar. I'll tell ya a funny story. I was over there and somebody called up the office over there asking if we were an Indian company. My guy over there said 'what kind? Dot heads or feathers?'" I mustered a weak chuckle to match his guffaws.

Another panel I attended that day was titled "Cultural strategies for rebuilding Iraq." The star attraction—and the guy I came to see—was Col. Matthew Bogdanos, a Marine reservist. Bogdanos wasn't there to sell something, but to tell a story. As a New York City assistant district attorney, he had taken on P. Diddy; on active duty, he had taken on Saddam Hussein. When the Iraqi National Museum was looted, Gen. Tommy Franks assigned Bogdanos, then deployed in southern Iraq, to head the antiquities recovery and investigation team. Bogdanos, a Greek American with a master's degree in classical studies, was a perfect fit.

When he arrived in Baghdad, the graffiti scrawled on museum's front door was not exactly welcoming: "Death to all Americans and Zionist pigs." But by embracing local customs he and colleagues won the trust of locals. They worked without helmets, like civilians, and lived inside the Museum so informants could come by at any time. The team made remarkable progress, recovering hundreds of priceless pieces and discovering many artifacts were not looted, but stowed away elsewhere. About 8,500 pieces were still missing, "but don't forget," he reminded the audience, "a necklace with 16 beads counts as 17 pieces." Dealing with informants in Iraq was a lot like being a cop in New York or DC, Bogdanos said. They can have ulterior motives for providing information and may have gang affiliations. "But chances are, you're not going to be led into an ambush on 125th and Amsterdam."

Jai Singh is a *Foreign Policy* editorial assistant.

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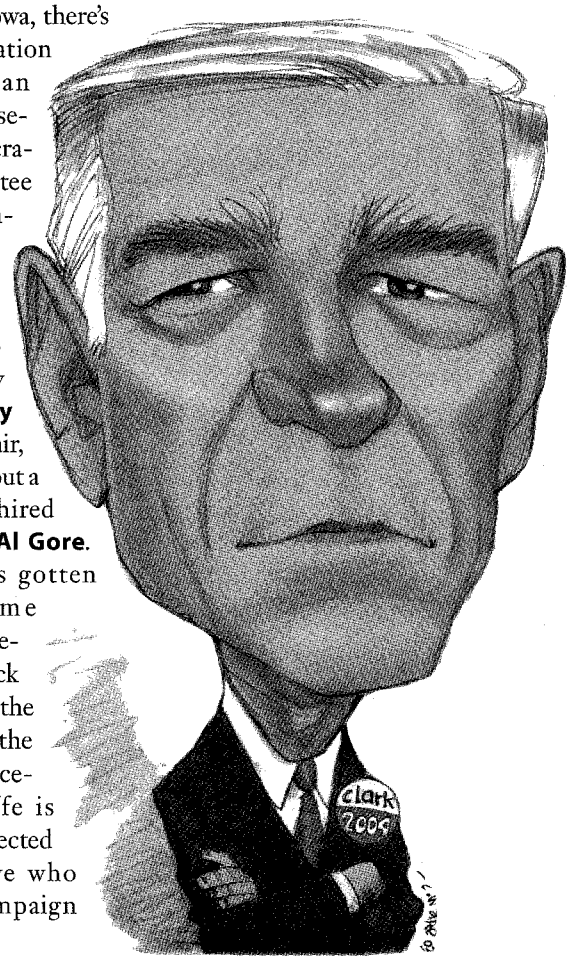
WHO'S WHO

George W. Bush and his top envoy in Iraq, **L. Paul "Jerry" Bremer** have become fast friends over the past few months—so much so that many in Foggy Bottom speculate that Bremer will replace Secretary of State **Colin Powell** if Bush wins a second term. *The Washington Post* reported recently that the two had a "double-date" dinner with their wives early in the fall and have worked out together in the White House gym. What the two couples may share most in common, however, are strong religious convictions. Bremer converted to Catholicism as an adult and his wife, Frances, is a prayer volunteer with www.dailyguideposts.com, a website that connects the prayer requests of complete strangers with volunteers who agree to pray for their concerns. In addition, the Bremers own a house in Lourdes, a town in France famous as the site of St. Bernadette's vision of the Virgin Mary and a pilgrimage destination for Catholics. The Bremers collect holy water from the site and Frances tells friends that the water has reportedly healed a cancer-stricken friend of the family as well as their ailing cat.

If Bremer doesn't succeed Powell, than who will? Syndicated columnist **Robert Novak** suggested recently that it would be Sen. **Richard Lugar** (R-Ind.), currently chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Like Powell, Lugar hails from the GOP's moderate wing on foreign policy, and his appointment would be a defeat for adminstration hawks, who expected that one of their own would be taking the top slot at Foggy Bottom. Speculation had centered on **Paul Wolfowitz**, the neoconservative intellectual currently serving as deputy secretary of Defense. But Novak reports that Wolfowitz is "reported to have lost favor at the White House"—perhaps because of his poor planning for postwar Iraq, the consequences of which may now threaten Bush's reelection.

Before even the first caucuses are held in Iowa, there's already speculation about whether Dean would engineer a housecleaning at the Democratic National Committee should he win the nomination and, perhaps, the presidency. It was only a few years ago, after all, that **Bill Clinton** and other party leaders installed **Terry McAuliffe** as DNC chair, in the process forcing out a number of recently-hired staffers with ties to **Al Gore**. Now that Gore has gotten behind Dean, some Democratic insiders predict it would be payback time should Dean win the nomination. Topping the list of potential replacements for McAuliffe is **Donna Brazile**, a respected grassroots operative who served as Gore's campaign manager in 2000.

If the press has already anointed Dean the presumptive nominee, rival candidate **Wesley Clark** doesn't seem to be taking notice. During a recent campaign stop in New York City, Clark met with New York State attorney general **Eliot Spitzer**, whom the General is reportedly considering as a running mate. Spitzer has garnered headlines for his pursuit of pharmaceutical companies, gun manufacturers, polluters, and—most famously—white-collar criminals on Wall Street, taking on the powerful investment firm Merrill Lynch. Spitzer's aggressive tough-on-crime style that has earned him the nickname "The Enforcer," as well as his New York background, would balance nicely with Clark's foreign-policy background and Southern roots.



Art by Chris Ware

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Mirth of a Nation

How Bill Clinton learned to tell jokes on himself—and get the last laugh.

Getty Images

By Mark Katz

He opened the door and I jumped to my feet. Watching the president of the United States enter the room is always a startling sight. Of course, the sight he encountered might have caught him off-guard too: a nervous guy in a tuxedo secluded in a dimly-lit holding room with a stack of pages in one hand and an egg timer in the other. Although this was the fifth humor speech I had prepared for President Bill Clinton since he'd taken office, we were about to have our very first one-on-one meeting. The occasion was the remarks he was about to give to the Alfalfa Club, the least known of the four annual Washington humor dinners that take place from January through April—collectively known as the "Silly Season." And on this snowy night in January of 1995, I was there to fulfill the duties of what was probably the oddest job description in town: a presidential joke writer, an adjunct member of the White House speechwriting staff on retainer by way of the Democratic National Committee.

Mark Katz is a former humor speechwriter for President Bill Clinton. From the book *Clinton and Me* by Mark Katz, to be published by Miramax Books in Feb. 2004. Copyright 2004 Mark Katz. All rights reserved. www.clintonandme.com

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The Alfalfa dinner came just four days after Clinton's third State of the Union address. Already somewhat infamous for his too-long orations, this had been Clinton's longest SOTU yet—one hour and twenty-one minutes—a fact pundits were using as a metaphor for an undisciplined, flailing presidency. In the news cycles that followed the State of the Union, everyone from David Brinkley to David Letterman had something to say about its oppressive length. Of all the facts crammed into his oration, only one resonated the following morning: This speech had been far too long. Yet the White House refused to concede that characterization. Every authorized spokesperson in the building was quick to point out that overnight polling revealed that approval ratings of the speech had come in at 83 percent.

That week, my job was to find the comic premise that would allow the president to score points with his Alfalfa audience—a fraternity of corporate CEOs, federal power brokers, and other establishment stalwarts. My answer was an egg timer. The stage directions of the draft I had sent to the president the night before instructed him to approach the podium, pull the timer from his pocket, set it to five minutes and greet the audience. That was sure to start the room laughing while also setting up a better joke to come: Once the timer expired, he was to add as many minutes as he wanted, as often as he wanted. It was a simple idea made funnier by juxtaposing a kitschy kitchen device with a presidential podium brimming with gravitas. But Bill Clinton's first full sentence to me that evening torpedoed the speech's very premise: "You can put that egg timer away," he said, glaring at the device I clasped in my hand.

"No egg timer?" I asked. I hoped he was joking.

"The egg timer's a joke on my State of the Union, right?" He seemed only about 83 percent sure.

"Yes it is," I said, ignoring for the moment what else it could possibly refer to.

"Well, forget it," he said. "They've been on me for four days straight about that speech."

"That's exactly why you should do it!" I blurted, in an assertive tone of voice that even surprised me a little.

As I saw it, this joke traded away nothing (conceding the obvious) for something (approving laughter and applause). Yet he saw it differently. The reason he was not inclined to engage in charming, self-effacing humor on this subject was that he was simply not willing to concede the point.

"Eighty three percent of the American people thought I gave a helluva speech," he insisted. "Only here inside the bubble did the reporters have trouble sitting still for more than twenty-five minutes."

The speech he went on to give later that night substituted for gentle, self-directed humor a hostile drive-by diatribe aimed at his critics. The room generously offered feigned laughter whenever it sensed that something he said was intended as a joke. Otherwise, the response was a collective, incredulous gape. Only when the room's response had been reduced to near silence did Clinton reach for the object behind the In-Case-of-Emergency-Break-Glass sign in his mind. He pulled the egg timer from his pocket and placed it on the podium, eliciting one of the few authentic laughs of the night.

Self-deprecating humor comes naturally to only the most skillful practitioners of public power and your average Jew. At that moment in his presidency, the benefits of self-directed jokes were not yet evident to Bill Clinton. As the designated White House in-house humorist, it was my job to guide him through Washington's odd humor rituals with my best and funniest suggestions for the things he might say. Somewhere in the course of my career that bridged the world of humor and politics, I had absorbed the first rule of successful presidential mirth-making. From Teddy Roosevelt ("Speak softly and carry a big stick.") to Ronald Reagan ("I am not worried about the deficit. It is big enough to take care of itself."), the most popular presidents have used wit to steal the ammunition from their critics as the best way to defend themselves. My personal presidential humor muse has always been John Kennedy, a man with a hyper-ironic and recklessly self-effacing wit. In 1958, then-Senator Kennedy was already leading the pack for the Democratic presidential nomination, but many in Washington still dismissed him as the brash son of a wealthy and unscrupulous man, a father too eager to bankroll his son's upcoming bid for the White House. Speaking at the Capitol Hilton before an audience of such skeptics, Kennedy held up what he said was a telegram from his "generous daddy" and read it aloud: "Jack, Don't spend one dime more than is necessary. I'll be damned if I am going to pay for a landslide." With a wink and a smile, John Kennedy had the audacity to tell a joke that, out of the mouth of another, would have been nothing less than devastating. This was my idea of a profile in courage.

Granted, not everyone is as naturally charming as JFK—or was this the work of his master wordsmith Ted Sorenson. (Ask not.) But these lessons are still there to be learned for those who stand upon the bully pulpit.

Bill Clinton is as smart as any person who's held the office, perfectly capable of generating witticism and winning over a crowd. But when being tortured endlessly by Beltway critics, even he needed a little help. Clinton had become accustomed to using humor as a barbed weapon; I tried to coax out of him something new—not Kennedy's entirely self-deprecating voice, nor his old, slightly venomous brand of humor, but a new style of self-effacing wit with a bit of a bite. In the end, Clinton did it his way: self-deprecating jibes, but with an elbow to his attackers, too.

Enough jokes on me

My first assignment for the newly inaugurated Pres-

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ident Clinton was to draft a page of jokes for his upcoming appearance at the White House Correspondents Dinner in 1993. Most of my suggested jokes were on the topic of his bumpy first hundred days in office. He leafed through my draft, his face unlit with enthusiasm. "Enough jokes on me," he said. "We need to do more jokes on all of them," meaning the media. "I thought this was a press dinner where I get to make fun of the press."

I realized then that we had arrived at a fundamental dividing line. I took for granted that the endgame of these ritual humor dinners was to ingratiate oneself to the audience—in this case, the press—and that the speaker should be his own primary target. From what I could tell, this did not come naturally to Bill Clinton. I had the feeling that he couldn't understand why we had handed him pages of self-deprecating jokes to tell to the people who deprecate him for a living. To him, it must have seemed like appeasing Torquemada by placing yourself on the rack until you confess.

This was also the symptom of the political culture shock of going from Little Rock to Washington. Clinton was raised in a political culture where gentle, self-effacing humor was all but unheard of, and political humor dinners featured a much meaner brand of funny. In Arkansas, I was told by people who'd know, humor is a stick that you beat other people up with. Clinton kept in his head a running list of the personal hypocrisies, professional double standards, specific unfair shots, and falsehoods uttered against him. He wanted to recite them all, and if they were expressed in the form of a joke, well, that was fine, too. But left to his own devices, the defining tone of his speech to the Washington press corps would be, "Katy, bar the door!"

A year later, when I helped prepare speeches for Clinton's upcoming appearances at the Radio and Television Correspondents Dinner and the White House Correspondents Dinner, the Whitewater scandal had dominated the newspapers for two weeks. Within the White House, I had by then become something of a humor evangelist, espousing to anyone who would listen a variant of the Twelve Step philosophy: things are only as bad as the stuff you can't joke about. I was eager to play high-stakes humor, and all of my instincts told me that humor's biggest payoff can come at the hour of maximum danger. Maybe on the long list of reasons why Whitewater was not Watergate was that this guy, the president, could stand up in front of three thousand rabid reporters and show the courage to laugh at the very idea.

The night before the speech, we sent a draft to the president; the night after that, a tuxedo-clad Bill Clinton took the podium to address the same Washington journalists who had recently made "Whitewater" a household word and opened with a geographic version of a time-honored line: "I am delighted to be here tonight. And if you believe that, I have some land in northwest Arkansas I'd like to sell you."

But having taken his self-administered medicine, Clinton then clearly savored the opportunity to deliver a broadside at those who had spent the last few months poring over his financial records: "I don't want to alarm any of you, but it's three days before April 15, and most of you have spent more time with my taxes than your own." And then in gently taunting, singsong voice, he said, "Many happy returns!"

The room—and Clinton—both enjoyed the speech, partly in relief that the obvious subtext of his words was not going to go unspoken. Clinton had fashioned a sort of self-directed punch line that also had the barbs he loved. As a humorist, he'd begun to find his voice, one which the coming years would give him a lot more opportunities to perfect.

The president of Karjahistan

When I arrived in DC in the spring of 1999, it was as if I were walking onto the set of "Geraldo!"—a place where anything can happen because it already has. A humor speech on the heels of an impeachment trial? Sure, bring it on! In contrast to the enervating effects of the sordid scandal itself, the aftermath of impeachment felt liberating, clarifying, energizing! Yes, our guy had conducted his private life appallingly and then proceeded to lie about it under oath. But the first impeachment trial since that of Andrew Johnson mostly left me fuming about those who had administered that oath—loathsome hypocrites eager to put someone else's hand on the Bible. Watching the Republican legislators and their allied prosecutors trump Clinton's reckless personal behavior with ruthless constitutional brinksmanship reminded me why I had signed up with my team in the first place. (Perhaps I had subconsciously processed the vices of JFK and Nixon and made my choice a long time ago.) But having made it through to the end of this ordeal—for which he was at least half to blame—Bill Clinton still needed to prove he could joke about it if he was to get past it.

My first conversation with head speechwriter Michael Waldman that spring set the tone for what was to come. After a few minutes spent hashing out the challenges of this political science-fiction scenario, we agreed that we had more latitude than usual: "What are they going to do," he said, "impeach us?"

That year, Waldman wanted to team me up with Jeff Shesol, a relative newcomer to the permanent speechwriting staff but one with his own talent for humor. Jeff's OEOB office became the Comedy War Room's new headquarters, my new seat the couch across from his desk. Our first day working together had us trying to come up with an ideal opening line at a press dinner that was an all-but-formal surrender of the Monica Media Wars. What might the president say to those at whom he had wagged his finger for more than a year that would demonstrate his contrition while somehow

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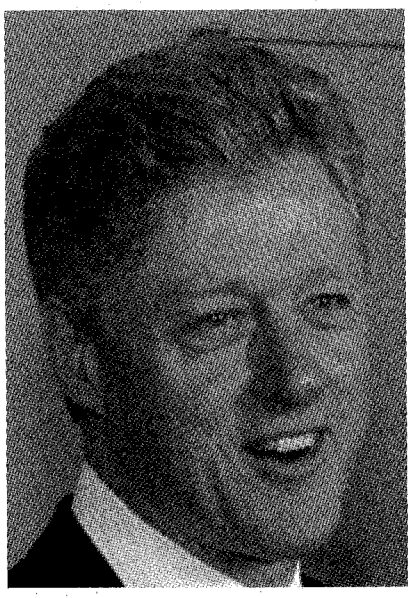

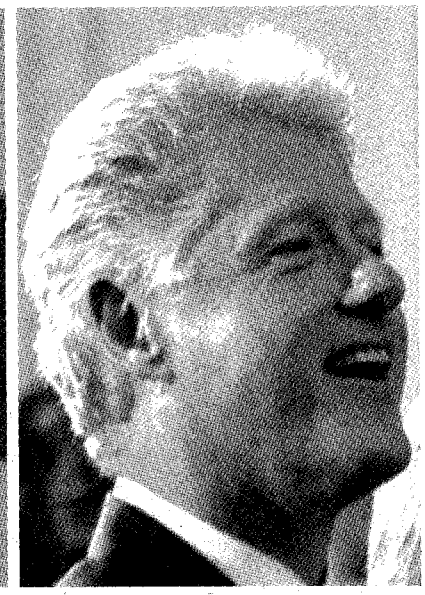

All photos by Getty Images

preserving his dignity? *Hmmmm. That was a tough one.* But before the day was over, we'd written an opening:

"Good evening. I want to thank you for your invitation to come have dinner with two thousand members of the Washington press corps. Now, I realize this has been a very serious matter. Let's face it: If the Senate vote had gone the other way, I wouldn't be here speaking to you tonight ... *I demand a recount!*"

Jeff and I were taken aback by the joke's admission that the president would have preferred removal from office to this moment of profound humility. What could be more contrite than that? But the more pertinent question was, would Clinton do that joke? Would it even live to see the next draft? Later that day, Waldman gave us an encouraging response, repeating what would become a mantra in the Comedy War Room from that week on: "*What are they going to do—impeach us?*"

In the frenzy of our free-for-all, we came upon another ambitious idea that would not, in fact, get Clinton re-impeached: a parody of a transparent White House ploy, employed frequently during the past 14 months to restrain the press corps. As Clinton's renewed interest in foreign affairs had grown over the past year or so, so too had the number of joint press appearances with world leaders. The White House clung to the faint hope that the press corps would be less aggressive about asking the president compromising questions as he stood on the international stage.

Our version of this strategy had Clinton calling to the stage the fictional chief executive of a fictional nation, who would provide cover from the press corps on this night as well. Within an hour of hatching the premise, we had fused stray syllables together to create both our world leader's name (Shoreb Arnsvat) and his sovereign state (Karjakistan). The laughter we generated in the process brought speechwriters writing less-fun remarks into our den. One of them, Ted Widmer, was a foreign affairs specialist on the staff of the National Security Council, and he loved the idea as much as we did. But he offered this word of caution: Making jokes at the expense of foreign nations—even fictional ones—is tricky business. He took a draft back with him to the NSC to run it by some policy wonks. Jeff and I went back to work.

Ted returned later with good news and bad. Concerned that our parody might hit a little too close to home in places abroad, the NSC had decided that we could not use the name "Karjakistan," as it was a pretty obvious slur on the lawlessness of the fledgling breakaway republics of the former Soviet Union. Also, the national security staff was running a linguistic check on the name of our leader to see if it contained any unintentional ethnic or regional ties. ("Shoreb Arnsvat" could be a name right out of the Macedonian phone book, for all we knew.) I was heartened by the NSC's diligence but also quietly enthralled by the idea of writing a joke that set off an international incident.

Ted mentioned one more red-flag issue that needed to be settled: In another section of the speech, a joke linked the radical right wing of the U.S. House of Representatives to the radical-right theocracy of Afghanistan:

"I was going to make jokes about the House Republicans tonight, about the managers. It wouldn't be fair; they're not here to defend themselves. They're all at the Taliban Correspondents' Association Dinner."

Ted planned to submit this joke directly to Sandy Berger, the White House national security advisor, for approval. (How cool was that?) This was a threshold I had never crossed in my many years inside the White House joke-vetting process.

The next morning, Ted returned with bad news: "Sandy killed the Taliban joke."

Jeff and I emitted loud, stereophonic groans.

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"He didn't think it was funny," Ted explained.

"Say that again?" I asked.

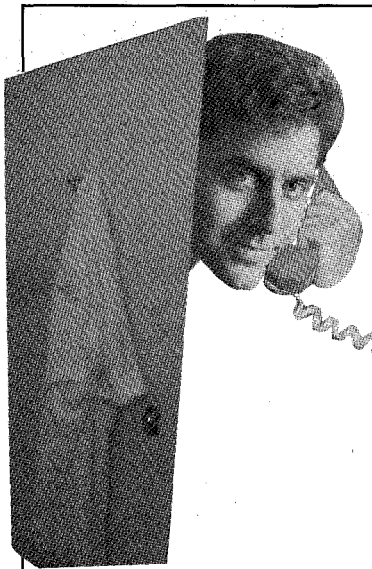
"He didn't like it. He said he didn't think it was funny."

"Ted, hold on," I said in disbelief. "We need some ground rules here: The national security advisor can kill any joke he likes on the grounds that it compromises national security. But he can't kill a joke because he doesn't think it's funny."

The authoritative tone of my voice belied the fact that as the White House joke writer, I was more than a few rungs below the national security advisor on the organizational chart. Nevertheless, Ted was sympathetic to my plea and agreed to take the joke back to his boss.

On Ted's next trip back to see us, we learned the unlikely outcome of this unlikely showdown: Sandy Berger blinked. (To his credit, Berger didn't trump up a national security concern to kill a joke that had simply failed to make him laugh.) Ted also had this news to report from the Situation Room: Berger had approved our substitute for Karjakistan, "Karjakador." With the name of his country approved at the highest levels, all Shoreb Arnsvat needed was someone to portray him the following Thursday. Jeff and I got back to writing jokes. Sandy Berger went back to planning the NATO air campaign in Kosovo that would commence three days later.

The weekend prior to the back-to-back speeches found me holed up in my hotel room, racking my brain for all the jokes and premises I could produce to bounce off Jeff come Monday morning. An important part of the process was figuring out which jokes and premises belonged in which speech, as there were sig-



White House operator

When brainstorming humor speeches, every sentence in every article I read enters my brain as an impulse stimulus, a potential setup line that dares my gray matter to spit back a punch line. Late one night as I was cramming jokes for Clinton's first White House Correspondents Dinner, I came across an article about the hundred day accomplishments of previous presidents, wherein it was mentioned parenthetically that America's ninth president, William Henry Harrison, died on his thirty-second day in office. With a little subtraction, and the addition of context, a joke for Clinton's upcoming speech was born: "I'm not doing so bad. I mean, at this point in his administration, William Henry Harrison had been dead for sixty-eight days!"

The Monday following the speech, sometime before noon, I was still damp from a late-morning shower when the telephone rang.

Hello?"

"White House operator calling for Mark Katz."

"This is Mark Katz."

"Please hold for the president of the United States..."

Fisher. It had to be Fisher. Dating back to our days together in junior high, my friend Fisher occasionally subjected me to his expertly executed telephone hoaxes. With a tidbit of information and plausible impersonation, he had played me for the fool a hundred times before. That is why as I stood there in my bath towel, I was not predisposed to believe that I was actually holding for the president of the United States. I pressed the phone to my ear and prepared to analyze the voice that would greet me after my stay on hold. My brain was on high alert.

"Hello, Mark?"

BRAIN: Not enough syllables to make a conclusive identification. Proceed with EXTREME caution!!!

"Hello."

"Mark, you did great work helping out on the jokes for the White House Correspondents Dinner. You did a terrific job and I just wanted to call and thank you again."

BRAIN: Holy shit! If this is Fisher, it's his best work yet. WARNING: The next words you say may be used to mock you for the rest of your life.

"You bet, sir."

I was determined to maintain my reticence until I achieved a higher degree of certainty. My silence compelled the caller to move the conversation forward.

"I really loved that William Henry Harrison joke. That one still cracks me up... already been dead for sixty-eight days! Ha!"

BRAIN: Identity confirmed! This is the third time the president has mentioned that he loved the William Henry Harrison joke. YOU ARE TALKING TO THE PRESIDENT! REPEAT: YOU ARE TALKING TO THE PRESIDENT!!!

Now I was excited.

"You got a great laugh on that one, Mr. President." It was the first time in the conversation I dared address him with that, but there were plenty more to come. This, I would learn, is a

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nificant distinctions between the two. The Radio and Television Correspondents Dinner was an event that aired live on C-SPAN, and the best handful of jokes would likely be showcased on TV the next day; the Gridiron was an off-the-record event, and its jokes echoed only inside the Beltway by way of a Monday morning *Washington Post* Style section piece. A joke that you'd want to be aired on the "Today Show" might not be the same one you write with Mary McGrory in mind.

For nearly a week after Waldman and the other West Wing honchos had signed off on the Shoreb Arnsvat foreign-leader bit, we had no one lined up to play the role. Jeff, speechwriter Jordan Tamagni, and I spent a fair amount of time throwing around names (Dana Carvey! Martin Short! Roberto Benigni!). But as time went on, we got more desperate (Jerry Van Dyke! The guy who played Balki from "Perfect Strangers"! John Hart from Intergovernmental Affairs!) No one was available or had yet signed on

Around 9 a.m. on Tuesday, Jordan walked into Jeff's office holding the Style section of *The Washington Post*, which had a feature story on its front page about a local theater director and actor whose work had been well-applauded in D.C. for the past few years. The photograph showed Nick Olcott to be a burly man with a neatly groomed beard, and his impressive credentials gave us reason to believe he would be a better Shoreb than John Hart from Intergovernmental Affairs. Jordan tracked Olcott down and asked him to come to the White House. Two hours later, he was in Jordan's office auditioning for the three of us. Two days later, "Shoreb" —wearing a black suit decorated with a red sash and bright medals—got huge laughs as he regaled an actu-

common phenomenon among people who find themselves in a conversation with a president. They interject the words "Mr. President" into nearly every sentence, as if afflicted with a very proper strain of Tourette's syndrome. There is just something about talking to the president that makes you punctuate your sentences with the words "Mr. President." Not because he wants to hear it-he knows very well who he is—but because you just love to hear yourself say it. After all, when is the next time you'll get to say "Mr. President" in a sentence? A co-op board meeting? More than that, interjecting those words adds import to any sentence you might say. Compare these sentences:

A. Cheese sandwiches are very tasty.

B. Cheese sandwiches are very tasty, Mr. President.

This condition is only made worse by the fact that speaking to the president can also make you talkative to the point of babbling. This happens for much the same reason: you are not really talking to the president, you are listening to yourself talking to the president. Your brain, so absorbed in listening to the conversation, becomes a cognitive bystander engaged in an internal monologue that goes something like this:

I am talking to the president.

I am talking to the president.

I just said something to the president.

The president is responding to something I just said.

For the rest of my life, I will be able to preface what I just said to the president with the words, 'As I once said to the president ...' "

Does anyone here remember what I said to the president? I'm gonna need it for when I tell people this story.

The president stopped talking. It is my turn to say something. Now I am going to listen to what I am about to say to the president. I wonder what it will be?

As it turned out, here's what I said to the president next: "You know what Mel Brooks says, Mr. President: 'Comedy equals tragedy plus time.'"

He had no response to that. Very few people quote Mel Brooks to the president. I explained further.

"What I mean, Mr. President, is that joke probably would not have gone over too well if Millard Fillmore said it."

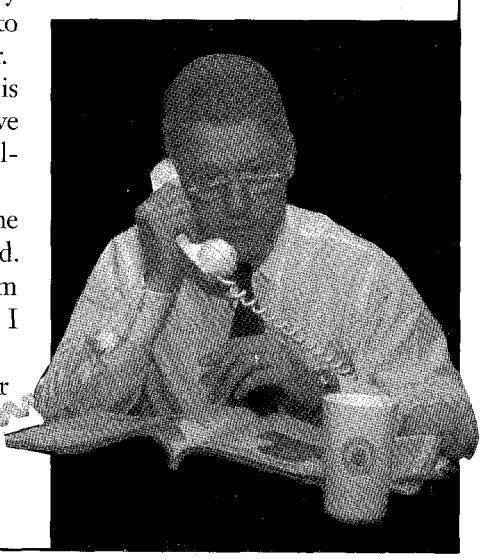
"Millard Fillmore completed the term of Zachary Taylor," he said. "John Tyler succeeded William Henry Harrison. But I think I know what you mean ..."

He'd given me more credit for my wrong reference than I deserved. I didn't know that Millard Fillmore had completed the term of anyone—I had just pulled out the name of a funny-sounding, obscure, mid-nineteenth century president. At this point, he must have remembered that he had called to thank me, not to administer a pop quiz.

"Anyway, I just loved that William Henry Harrison joke."

The president's tone let me know that this conversation was winding down. He encouraged me to fax him jokes if ever I had an idea for something funny he might say. A few seconds later, he was saying good-bye. Before it was over, I got to hear myself say it one last time:

"Thank you for calling, Mr. President."



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The Washington Monthly's Annual Political Book Awards

Send your nominations today for *The Washington Monthly*'s Annual Political Book Award. Award winners and notable books published in 2003 will be announced in our March 2004 issue.

Our Annual Political Book Award is presented to nonfiction works which demonstrate a commitment to the public interest. We are particularly interested in reporting that explains the successes and failures of government agencies at all levels and of other institutions such as the media, corporations, unions, and foundations that contribute to the existence or solution of public problems.

Please send nominations (including a copy of the book, if possible) to:
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Annual Political Book Award
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Or email nominations to:
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Last year's Annual Political Book Award winners (for 2002 books) included:

HIGH AND MIGHTY: SUVs
The World's Most Dangerous Vehicles and How They Got That Way.
By Keith Bradsher
(Public Affairs)

THE THREATENING STORM:
The Case for Invading Iraq
By Kenneth M. Pollack
(Random House)

THE RISE OF THE CREATIVE CLASS:
And How It's Transforming Work, Leisure, Community, and Everyday Life
By Richard Florida
(Basic Books)

THE EMERGING DEMOCRATIC MAJORITY
By John B. Judis and Ruy Teixeira
(Scribner)

al world leader in an invented language like a long-lost friend.

Former White House aide George Stephanopoulos's then-upcoming book played another, even more important role in the president's speech. It gave us the idea for a memoir theme—a joke-breeding ground that Jeff and I found too fertile to ignore. For the better part of two days, we took turns sitting at his computer, trying our hand at a comic preview of the forthcoming Clinton memoirs that would become the premise of his Gridiron speech.

Page 134: Election night, 1994. A tense and difficult night. In the family quarters of the residence, Hillary and I watched the returns with a few close friends and advisors. Sperling paced nervously. Begala stared sullenly into space while Leon Panetta bit his nails. 'Bite your own nails, Leon,' Begala snapped.

My own temper flared at the notion of Newt wielding the Speaker's gavel. 'Damn it,' I said, snapping a pretzel stick in my clenched fist. It was a display of anger that startled everyone present, even myself.

I took a deep breath. I counted to ten. By the time I hit six, word of my outburst had reached CNN. But all of a sudden I knew exactly what to do. I saw it all very clearly, the path to yet another comeback. 'Panetta,' I said, 'take a memo. I want you to book Newt Gingrich a seat on Air Force One soon, in the back of the plane.'

Page 319: I was sitting at my desk reinventing government one day when [pollster] Mark Penn walked into the Oval Office. He was waving a sheet of paper. 'Mr. President, the overnight polls say. . .' I cut him off: 'The polls? Why are you always bringing me polls?' At my strong urging, Mark spent the next six months as an AmeriCorps volunteer.

"Now let me read you this from the last chapter, the chapter on 1998. Here it is."

1998. What a year. We saved the surplus for Social Security. Hillary and I took historic trips to China and Africa. I signed the second balanced budget in a row. And in the November election, the president's party gained seats in the House of Representatives for the first time in a second-term off-year election since 1822.

"Now, that wasn't an excerpt. That was the chapter on 1998."

Two days later, on the dais of the Saturday-night Gridiron dinner, a white-tied Clinton eagerly presented the poster-sized covers of his would-be memoirs and read the passages that were its supposed "excerpts." He also made some pointed jokes at the expense of those who had devoted all of their energy to removing him from office.

"I won't kid you. This was an awful year. It was a year I wouldn't wish upon my worst enemy … No, I take that back."

The president was as relaxed as I'd ever seen him, fearless in his self-mockery and brazen in his attitude toward his well-known foes. Smart guy that he is, Bill Clinton probably saw the more-daring-than-usual jokes on the page and thought to himself: What are they going to do—impeach me? ◆

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Clash Between Hindus and Muslims Leave 22 Dead in Bombay

Arab Kills 2 Israelis in Stabbing Spree

New York Jews' Fears Amid Racial Anguish

Lethal Violence Rises in Israeli-Occupied Territory

Arabs Seize and Vow to Kill Israeli if Sheik Isn't Free

AT LEAST 40 SLAIN IN WEST BANK AS ISRAELI FIRES INTO MOSQUE;

With Apologies To Aesop

Once upon a time in the ancient city of Jerusalem, three sons were born: one a Jew, one a Christian and one a Moslem. The old woman in charge of the nursery could not see well and, alas, the three babies were mixed up.

The Jew was taken to a Moslem household, the Christian to a Jewish home and the Moslem for baptism in a Christian family.

So it came to pass that when the three boys grew to manhood, there was bad blood and much hate among Jew, Christian and Moslem, so that the Jew raised as a Moslem slew the Moslem of Christian birth. The Christian, son of Islam, put to sword the Jew born of Christ Birth, and the Moslem, sired by a Jew, strangled the Christian born of Islam.

In the name of all merciful God-Allah-Jehovah—amid great misery and loud lament—the land was drenched with blood.

Moral: Life without religion is better, much better.

—Nicholas Stephen Poluhoff

RABBI KNIFED IN WAVE OF ANTI-JEWISH ATTACKS

Religious riots kill three more

INDIA - At least three people died in New Delhi Muslim slum yesterday

AT LEAST 200 KILLED IN INDIA

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The
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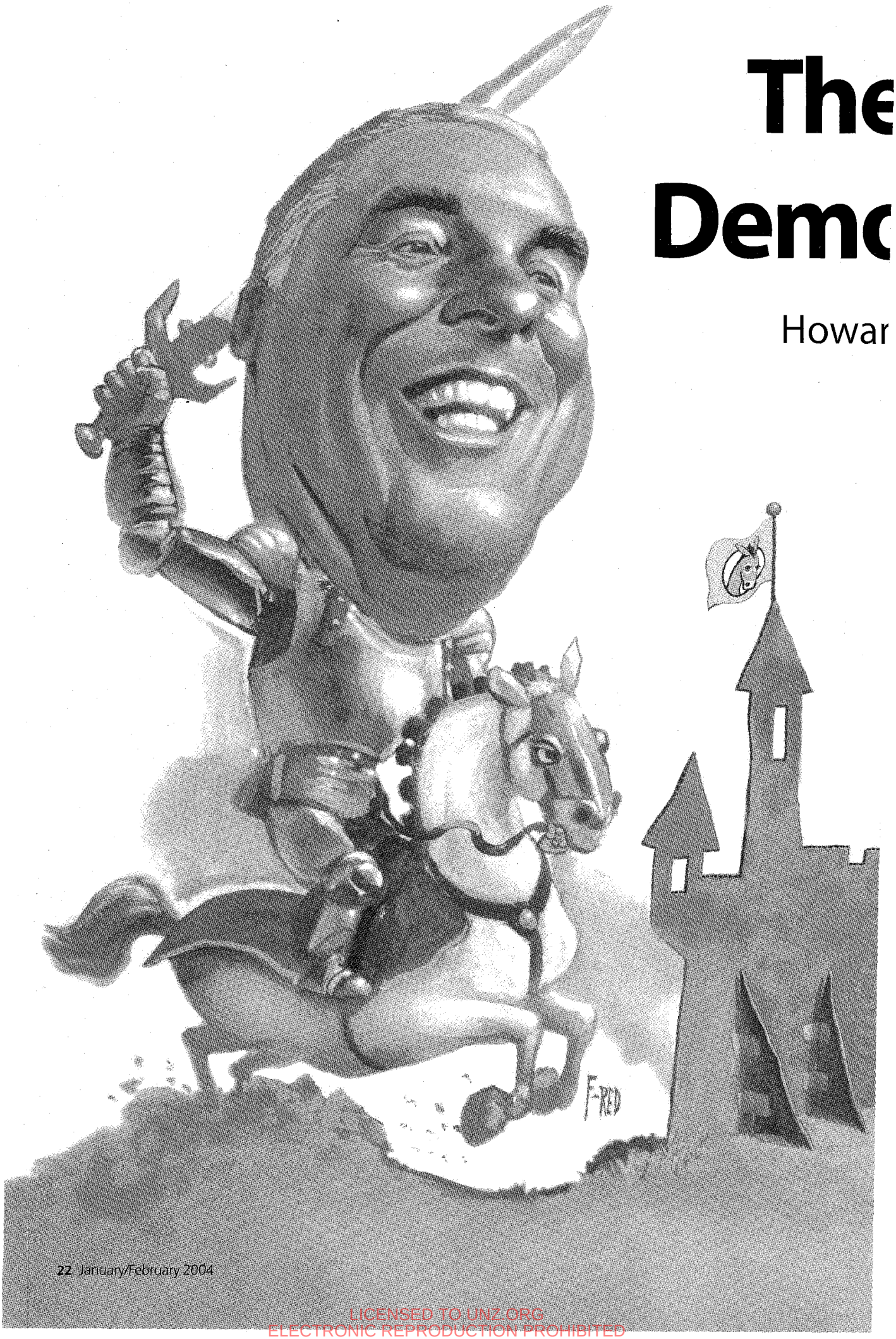

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Myth of the
ratic Establishment

ean's grassroots rebellion against the power that isn't.

By Nicholas Confessore

It's not hard to discern the strengths that have turned Howard Dean from a dark-horse candidate to the clear frontrunner for the Democratic presidential nomination. Over the last six months, the former Vermont governor has sparked a hardy, dedicated movement of more than half a million grassroots followers. Dean and his staff have harnessed the Web in innovative ways to organize and expand his following, huge crowds of which emerge at Dean's major campaign appearances. He's not only raised far more money than any other Democratic candidate; he's also taken about half of it in donations of less than $200, displaying a flair for small-donor fundraising in a party that has traditionally been terrible at it. And Dean has accomplished all this by taking a plain stance against a popular war and criticizing the Bush administration as often as possible, with an appealing bluntness few professional politicians are capable of pulling off.

Art by Fred Harper

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But perhaps Dean's most impressive feat, admirers and critics alike agree, has been "taking on the Washington Democratic establishment," as pundit Tucker Carlson recently put it on CNN. Dean has faced a phalanx of Washington-based candidates—Rep. Richard Gephardt (D-Mo.), Sen. John Kerry (D-Mass.), and Sen. Joe Lieberman (D-Conn.)—each of whom enjoys such establishment advantages as name recognition, a passel of ace political consultants, and deep Beltway roots.

When those candidates didn't quite catch fire, Gen. Wesley Clark entered the race, promptly earning the explicit or implicit backing of many leading Democrats, including former President Bill Clinton, whose fundraising network helped Clark build up a substantial war chest in a matter of weeks. But Dean has kept racking up poll leads and fundraising totals, leaving Washington insiders wondering how he could resist the establishment's onslaught. As one columnist for *The Christian Science Monitor* wrote in December, "Most establishment Democrats and liberals in the news media are waiting for someone—anyone—to dethrone former Vermont Gov. Howard Dean as the party's presidential front-runner." Dean's own campaign sees itself as locked in mortal combat with "a pretty strong establishment" as campaign manager Joe Trippi described it in a December appearance on "This Week."

A week before Christmas, I decided to seek out the Democratic establishment, hoping to stride through its halls of power and behold its vastness firsthand. Catching a cab a few blocks from the White House, I made my way down K Street, passing by the trade associations and corporate offices that today rarely hire a lobbyist without approval from Republican leaders on the Hill. Veering onto Massachusetts Avenue, we drove by the gleaming wedge of glass and concrete that houses the Cato Institute, a libertarian think tank spearheading President Bush's effort to privatize Social Security, and circled around the Capitol, where Republicans control both chambers of Congress and Democrats have trouble lining up rooms to caucus in. We passed by the Heritage Foundation, numerous alumni of which now help set national policy in the Bush administration, turned right, and meandered over to Capitol Hill, a funky neighborhood perpetually on the verge of gentrification.

The driver let me off in front of a modest, four-story brick office building which houses, among other things, a temp agency, a dry cleaners, and the National Barley Growers Association. The security guard ignored me as I slipped into the elevator, rode to the top floor, and stepped out into the modest, pastel-colored reception area of the Democratic Leadership Council, which helped get the last Democratic president into office, and whose early and frequent criticisms of Dean have helped highlight his fight against the Washington establishment. I was led through a quiet warren of cubicles to the large, paper-strewn office of Bruce Reed, the DLC's president, chief policy thinker, and resident wit. Reed is a cheerful, outgoing sort who usually appears younger than his 43 years. But today, an air of resignation lurks behind the smile.

When I ask him what the establishment is doing to stop Dean, Reed grimaces slightly, as if he's just taken a sip of castor oil. "What are we doing to stop him?" asks Reed. "From our standpoint, this has always been up to the candidates themselves." Reed and his colleagues at the DLC—often painted by liberals as a centrist Death Star, bulging with corporate money and insidious influence over party affairs—have published a few op-eds comparing Dean's candidacy to George McGovern's disastrous 1972 run. But that's about it. Some DLC operatives are working with Lieberman, others with Edwards. The New Democratic Network, a DLC-descended PAC, hasn't attacked Dean; instead, they've praised his use of the Internet to build a campaign organization. "Let's back up to your central premise," Reed continues, gazing wearily at a 7-inch-tall cup of Starbucks sitting before him on a conference table. "There is no establishment. We"—meaning Washington Democrats—"are a constellation of interest groups and ideologies and congressional voices. The evidence that there isn't an establishment is just the mere fact that we have so many candidates—and such a collective inability to choose between them."

Reed's point is hard to dispute. Liberal Democrats are as divided as centrists; many went early for Kerry, the early "establishment" candidate who has lately flopped. Labor is split down the middle, with the old industrial unions backing Gephardt, a longtime ally, and the service unions edging towards Dean. Most congressional Democrats and members of the Democratic National Committee—who, as convention "superdelegates," could conceivably swing behind and energize an anti-Dean candidate—are less interested in challenging the front-runner than in gauging the precise moment of his inevitability. "You have to realize, these people are all followers. Not leaders," says one Democratic strategist. "They put their finger to the wind." Democratic donors are also split. After Dean, no candidate has earned a sustained edge in campaign cash. Even the Clinton wing of the party, by some accounts the puppet masters behind the "stop Dean" movement, aren't much more than an inchoate collection of pollsters, consultants, and former White House staffers divvied up among the rival campaigns of other candidates. "You could undoubtedly find an enormous number

Nicholas Confessore is an editor of *The Washington Monthly.*

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of people who would want to stop Dean," one Democratic strategist told me in December. "But there's nowhere to go with them. What are you going to do—spend the holidays convincing other candidates to drop out of the races?"

There is, to be sure, a group of Democrats in Washington who think of themselves as part of an establishment. They have helped raise money for and steer talent to different candidates for the party's nomination. They have access to the press, to whom they have dispensed a litany of on-and-off-the-record doubts about Dean's electability. They convene for anxious steak lunches at the Palm. But to call them an "establishment" is like calling the House of Lords a force in British legislative affairs. It is almost impossible to exaggerate how incoherent today's Democratic establishment is, or how little power it has to accomplish anything of substance. Howard Dean has overcome many hurdles on his way to becoming the Democratic frontrunner. But the Democratic establishment is not exactly at the top of the list.

Party crashing

The absence of a true Democratic establishment is the central fact not only of the current presidential contest, but also of the last three years of Beltway politics. Washington Democrats are not wholly without political and strategic assets. But when you put it all together, there's not much to look at.

Democrats not only lack control of the White House and either chamber of Congress, they don't even have strong party institutions to fall back on. Not long after the 2000 elections, party chieftains installed fundraising wunderkind Terry McAuliffe at the Democratic National Committee with a mandate to rebuild the party's long-dilapidated political infrastructure. He's succeeded about as well as anyone could, considering that after he became chairman, those same party chieftains successfully pushed through Congress a campaign finance reform which deprived the DNC of most of its income. These days, McAuliffe is reduced to bragging that his new small-donor program brings in enough money to cover the DNC's operating expenses.

The Democrats also lack the kind of idea factories which, in the absence of controlling any branch of government, are vital to helping parties formulate policy and strategy. The Brookings Institution, supposedly the brain trust of left-leaning intellectuals, houses a number of former Clinton policy hands and publishes well-turned monographs on nuclear nonproliferation and pension reform. But it's hardly a node in the Democratic resistance—until recently, it was run by a Republican. The foremost advocacy-oriented think tanks on the left—the Economic Policy Institute, the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, and the DLC's Progressive Policy Institute—together spend about as much in a year as does just one of the three prominent conservative policy shops, the American Enterprise Institute. Meanwhile, the pressures of Republican rule are beginning to undermine the Democrats' relationship with such long-time allies as the AARP, which recently endorsed GOP-authored prescription-drug legislation, handing Bush a major legislative victory to tout during his reelection campaign. And while Beltway Republicans can count on the likes of the *The Washington Times* and the FOX News Channel to function as de facto party organs, the Democrats have no such relationship with the mainstream media. NPR has a liberal temperament but, to say the least, lacks a Rush Limbaugh-like taste for political warfare. And *The Washington Post*, once the liberal Beltway media's high command, if anything now reflects a center-right perspective. The paper's editorial page, having spent the Clinton years hyperventilating about Whitewater, opined that Enron's White House contacts weren't worth a congressional investigation and strongly supports the war in Iraq.

Washington Democrats have recognized their own disarray, and complain about it often. Yet they have continued to behave in many respects as a party in power, negotiating with Republican leaders on the Hill as if they, and not the GOP, govern the nation. "Democrats are inclined to legislate," says Chris Jennings, who ran the health-care portfolio during the Clinton administration. "They always want to be the dealmaker." Nowadays, however, instead of making a deal, the Democrats usually get rolled. Most recently, Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.) helped congressional Republicans craft their prescription-drug proposal on the understanding that it would not include provisions aimed at privatizing Medicare—provisions which nevertheless made their way into the final legislation, unveiled in December and now signed into law. "It's not just that Ted Kennedy was the old liberal lion, but that he supposedly knew how to play the game," says one union strategist, describing the shock many Washington Democrats felt at how the Medicare debate played out. "He's been on the Hill for 40 years. How could he get conned like this?"

Even as out-of-power Democrats act like establishmentarians, the city's ascendant GOP ruling class retain the instincts of revolutionaries. For three years, Democratic voters and activists across the country have watched the Republican Party assail, with seeming impunity, everything they hold dear. Aside from filibustering the GOP's energy plan and blocking a handful of exceptionally reactionary judicial nominees, there are few success stories to which Democratic leaders can point. There's no question that this experience has created a wellspring of anger against both congressional Republicans and President Bush. But the GOP's romp has also elicited from the Democratic grassroots a deep contempt for the party's Washington leadership. That frustration is the defining characteristic of the ongoing primary contest, dwarfing debates over policy, ideology, or electoral strategy. Dean and his movement have risen up to do battle against an establishment that doesn't really exist—which is why he will almost certainly be the next Democratic nominee. "Dean's people are motivated, they're coherent and cohesive," says one Democratic insider. "They're giving him money hand over fist. And he can just knock over this Potemkin village."

Demise of the machine

The Democratic establishment was once vigorous and powerful, encompassing not only Washington's Hill barons,

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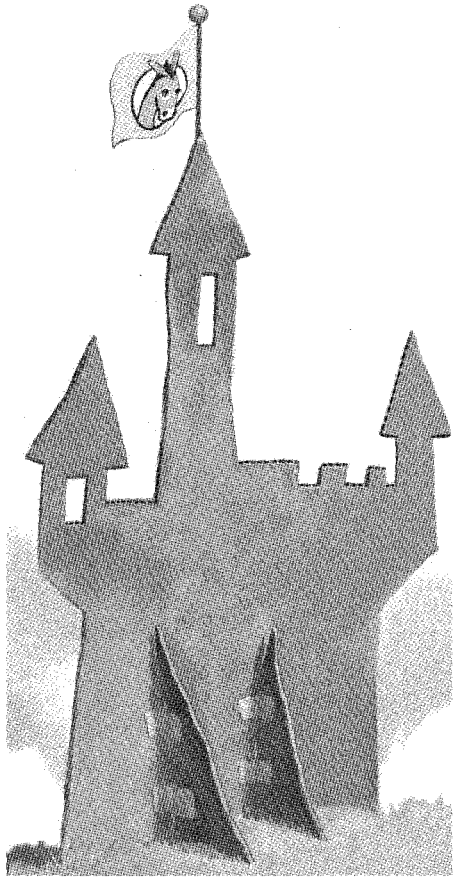
party officials, and a large labor movement, but also the heads of various state and city Democratic organizations, ranging from the courthouse cliques of the Solid South to Richard J. Daley's Chicago machine. The old Democratic establishment was not necessarily democratic, and not always progressive. But by linking the local and state institutions that engaged average citizens to the Washington elites who crafted legislation, this establishment provided crucial capacities to the Democratic Party. It could hash out compromises on everything from labor law to presidential candidates (often in the proverbial smoke-filled room). In the days before television, it communicated the party's message and organized rank-and-file voters. And for three decades, this establishment held together the disparate blocs—conservative Southerners, urban autocrats, blacks, union members, and northern liberals—that made the Democrats a majority party. Between the 1930s and 1960s, the Democrats won seven out of nine presidential elections and usually controlled both houses of Congress as well.



But the same forces that dismantled the old Democratic coalition during the next two decades also dismantled the old Democratic establishment. Conservative whites deserted the party over its support for civil rights and began to vote Republican. The labor movement began a slow decline in membership and influence. Civil-service laws whittled away at the power of the big-city machines. What prerogatives the Democratic establishment retained were slowly stripped away by liberal reformers within the party. During the late 1970s, a DNC-sponsored commission chaired by George McGovern eviscerated the establishment's power over nominations, linking delegate selection to the outcome of primary elections rather than the fiat of state-level party bosses.

The reformers succeeded in breaking up the old system. But the effect was less to devolve power to the party's grassroots than to shrink what had been a national Democratic establishment into a largely Washington-based one, which absorbed the reformers into its ranks. Power flowed away from the disintegrating state organizations and to a growing array of Washington-based pressure groups descended from the civil rights, feminist, consumer, and environmental movements. But these—the Children's Defense Fund, Common Cause, and Public Citizen, among others—increasingly were Beltway-based organizations run by professional activists. They raised money from members but didn't involve them much in day-to-day politics the way, say, neighborhood party organizations turned out voters in return for filling potholes. These groups influenced politics largely through endorsements, lobbying their allies on the Hill, direct mail, and media campaigns. (The exceptions were labor and the black urban machines which supplanted the white ethnic ones, both of which could still turn out voters the old-fashioned way.) Similarly, as advertising and free media began to supplant state parties and urban machines as the establishment's conduit to voters, a burgeoning class of Washington-based pollsters, political consultants, and fundraisers came to the fore. The reign of the bosses gave way to the reign of the experts.

But although this post-1972 Democratic establishment owned a huge chunk of Washington real estate, it was not particularly well-organized. The younger members of congress and newly-assertive liberal activists coexisted uneasily with the remnants of the pre-reform establishment. By Ronald Reagan's first inauguration, the DNC and other party organizations were metaphorically atrophied and, at times, literally bankrupt. For most of the 1980s, the Democrats had no clear leader and, after three successive presidential losses, no governing ideology to replace the old Cold War liberalism.

What gave the Democratic ruling class power was its permanence. Decades of Democratic dominance in Washington had bequeathed a wealth of experience and talent, people who knew the levers of power and how to work them. Many of Washington's key trade associations, law firms, and lobby shops were run by operatives who had cut their teeth in the Kennedy and Johnson administrations. (Among the last of them is Jack Valenti, the former Johnson aide and longtime head of the Motion Picture Association of America, who this year announced his decision to retire.) Control of the House and Senate helped the congressional wing of the party extract jobs and campaign contributions from Republican-leaning business interests, while giving Democratic-leaning interests a purchase on policymaking and at least some incentive to cooperate and compromise with one another. With a majority in the House, Democrats could control the committee staffs, which provided a research engine to develop and implement policy. The Speaker's Office, especially under Rep. Tip O'Neill (D-Mass.), provided a message of the day around which other Democrats and their allies could align themselves. Indeed, to many

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Democrats—not to mention many Republicans—the permanence of Democratic rule on the Hill was an accepted fact of Washington life.

When it came to presidential primaries, the Washington-based Democratic establishment wasn't as dominant as its earlier incarnation. Small groups of party officials could no longer handpick delegates and tell them whom to vote for. Insurgent or "entrepreneurial" candidates could in theory win the nomination simply by winning the affections of Democratic primary voters, as Jimmy Carter did in 1976. But thanks to the earlier campaign finance reforms, a candidate's ability to raise money became the chief criteria for whether or not he or she could make a successful run for the nomination. During the early 1980s, party leaders reasserted their power by front-loading the primary schedule. That made it hard for later entrepreneurial candidates, such as Gary Hart, to raise money quickly enough to sustain a surge, and put a premium on the fundraising advantages that usually accrued to candidates blessed by the establishment, such as Walter Mondale. Day to day, the establishment could exert real power in Washington even when on the defensive. Not long after Reagan's 1980 victory, for example, a group of party strategists began to meet biweekly with O'Neill's general counsel, Kirk O'Donnell, to plot strategy. Seizing on Reagan's proposal to cut the Social Security benefits of some retirees, the Democrats began to introduce legislation to put House conservatives on the wrong side of the issue. "It was drip, drip," says Tony Coelho, the former California congressman who at the time ran the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee. "We created a voting record where the Republicans were voting wrong on Social Security and so forth. They were winning, but in '82, we ran against them on a lot of the stuff we had forced them to vote on. We picked up 26 seats and then we kept going from there."

Every scrap of power this establishment possessed in Washington, however, was contingent on Democratic control of Congress. The labor movement was not nearly as large or vigorous as it had once been. Left-leaning pressure groups derived most of their power not by mustering large, active memberships on the ground, but through their access to and tight alliance with Democrats on the Hill. And all along, the foundations of that majority were rotting away. Electorally, Democratic rule in the House and Senate rested on a large contingent of Southern conservatives whose constituents had been reliably voting for Republican presidential candidates for over a decade. Financially, congressional Democrats had, through the 1980s and early 1990s, become dependent on campaign cash from corporate special interests, who gave to them not out of ideological sympathy but in return for tax breaks, subsidies, and other giveaways that gave the party the appearance—and often the reality—of decadence and corruption. Some of that money went to build voter lists and send direct mail, but the Democrats never really created a permanent, enduring party infrastructure: a grassroots fundraising capacity and policy and message shops independent of the Hill.

When Bill Clinton took office in 1993, the party looked healthy. Democrats commanded the White House, respectable majorities in the House and Senate, and control of 40 statehouses; Democratic governors represented eight-tenths of the U.S. population. Clinton annexed the DNC to the White House political shop, and directed its chairman, David Wilhelm, to focus all his efforts towards passing health-care reform. That move was understandable at the time. But instead of universal health care, the party got a legislative debacle that deprived the Democrats of a clear success on which to run. Combined with the House banking scandal fomented by Rep. Newt Gingrich (R-Ga.) and his allies, the passage of NAFTA (which depressed the labor vote), and Clinton's 1993 tax hike (which motivated the GOP base), the result was decisive. In November 1994, the Democrats lost control of both Houses of Congress for the first time in four decades.

Base instincts

The conservatives who took over the House in 1995 were organized very differently from the Democrats they overthrew. They had built their movement largely without control of governmental institutions, in the shade of Democratic rule. During the 1970s, with the help of newly energized right-wing donors, conservative activists had begun to build a relatively small network of advocacy think tanks, media outlets, legal advocacy shops, and ideological pressure groups to counter both the Democratic establishment and what they viewed as a compliant, dissolute Republican establishment. During the 1980s, this "counter-establishment," as journalist Sidney Blumenthal called it, challenged the GOP old guard for dominance in the White House and on the Hill. They built up a critique of liberalism and a system of institutions that, by combining policy, political, and media functions under one roof, could sustain their movement in the wilderness.

Far from demoralizing the conservative counter-establishment, Clinton's 1992 victory caused it to gel. Grover Norquist's famed Wednesday Group began meeting not long after Election Day, coordinating key conservative interest groups, Hill staffers, and media. Think tanks like AEI and Cato expanded to absorb the exodus of policymakers from the Bush administration, keeping conservative talent within the Beltway. While right-wing media outlets attacked Clinton's character, conservative backbenchers brought together social conservatives and business lobbyists—uneasy partners in the GOP coalition through the 1980s—to leach support from his policy agenda and lay the groundwork for a counter-attack. When the GOP took over Congress in 1995, the counter-establishment fused with the Republicans' congressional wing to become, in effect, Washington's new ruling class.

But although the Democratic establishment was effectively dead, its members were slow to pick up on the fact. Gingrich's implosion in 1995, followed by modest Democratic pickups during the next few election cycles, lulled House Democrats—and the interest groups which radiat-

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ed outward from them—into believing that they could retake the Hill without the kind of spade work that the conservatives had invested. Most importantly, the Clinton White House lent the rump Democratic establishment some of the capacity they had with Congress. Although he had been in many respects a Beltway outsider, Clinton's popularity, political acumen, and fundraising prowess lent Washington Democrats the appearance of vitality, even as their brethren at the state and local level continued to lose ground and the soft-money scandals of the mid-1990s decimated what remained of the party's infrastructure. Control of the executive branch provided thousands of jobs to Democratic policy experts, while the White House itself acted as a centripetal force on the party's congressional caucus and disparate interest groups. The president himself represented "a single voice that could define the debate" and drag the rest of the party establishment along behind him," noted Bruce Reed, while the White House provided "a table to sit around" to resolve disagreements and formulate strategy.

All of that was lost in 2001, when George W. Bush entered office. Without institutional support, the Democratic establishment fractured into its constituent parts, none of them dominant in terms of money, message, or ideology. Unlike conservatives, the Democrats hadn't built up a farm team of ideological institutions to absorb the governing experience and political talent streaming out of the White House. As Kenneth Baer, a Democratic consultant and former White House speechwriter, lamented in *Slate* a month after Bush's inauguration, "One way to explain the party's post-election drift is that the people who best understand the intersection of policy and politics—those most able to craft a Democratic response to Bush—are scattered to the wind."

Responsibility for crafting a Democratic strategy and message defaulted to the minority leaders in the House and Senate, Gephardt and Sen. Tom Daschle (D-S.D.). But although they had some early successes—notably, capitalizing on White House arrogance to convince Sen. Jim Jeffords (I-Vt.) to abandon his party, giving Democrats control of the Senate—Daschle and Gephardt couldn't create an effective opposition. One problem was that the Democrats still didn't understand how tenuous their hold on power really was. When the Enron scandal boiled over in early 2002, for instance, Joe Lieberman—at the time chairman of the Senate Government Affairs Committee—argued that the Democrats shouldn't "rush to judgment" and waited five months to subpoena the White House regarding administration officials' contacts with Enron executives, by which point public interest in the firm's bankruptcy had waned. Democrats also lacked the P.R. capabilities that conservatives had built up during their years out of power. When conservative activists and media outlets began to attack Daschle as "an obstructionist" for blocking Republican energy legislation—one group, the Family Research Council, ran ads comparing him to Saddam Hussein—the Democrats had no war room equipped to bombard newspapers with letters to the editor, demanding an apology. Nor could Democrats muster an army of chat-show surrogates who would aggressively parrot the party line on tax cuts.

Part of the problem, of course, was that there *was* no party line—on tax cuts, or anything else. Without an apparatus to build consensus around effective message, strategy, or policy, the Democrats spent the first two years of the Bush administration, in the midst of a recession, without an economic plan. As the GOP aggressively pushed massive a series of long-term tax cuts mostly benefiting the wealthy, the Democrats split, with liberals preaching total opposition, moderates favoring modest tax cuts for the middle class, and a few conservatives jumping ship to support Bush's plan. The plan which in retrospect made the most tactical and substance sense—massive, short-term cuts for the middle class, financed by payroll-tax reductions—was promoted by some party leaders, including former Labor Secretary Robert B. Reich. But without a mechanism for dragging other Democrats on board, the party was left without a national economic message to campaign on. They decided to talk a lot about a Democratic prescription-drug plan instead—and found out, too late, that voters couldn't tell their proposal apart from the Republicans'.

Without strong party institutions, the Democrats became even more dependent on the resources of their special interests—and even less willing to break with those interests even when doing so would have been politically prudent. There is no better example than the 2002 debate over creating a new department for homeland security. Democrats came up with the idea, while Republicans spent five months resisting it. But when Bush decided to support it—with provisions that would have given him authority to hire and fire employees of the new agency and dissolve their collective bargaining agreements—Senate Democrats blocked the bill out of deference to public-employee unions. On the campaign trail that fall, Bush successfully painted Democratic candidates like Vietnam veteran Sen. Max Cleland (D-Ga.) as soft on terrorism, arguably costing Democrats control of the Senate.

It took another year for Democrats to begin sorting through the lessons of that defeat. And only when the failures of Bush's Iraq policy—misleading statements in the State of the Union, failure to find weapons of mass destruction, and chaos on the ground—became evident did establishment Democrats, including those running for president, find their voices and begin aggressively criticizing the president. But by then, it was too late. Dean had gotten there first.

Primary schooling

Since last winter, the 2004 primary campaign has been, for all intents and purposes, a referendum on the Washington establishment, held by the party's grassroots. Rank-and-file Democrats love Dean not so much because he's "taken on" a powerful Washington establishment, but because he has tapped voters' fury and dismay that the establishment seems so powerless—even with half the popular vote behind it. It's because the establishment is pathetic, not powerful, that these people support Dean.

This grassroots fury against the "Washington Democ-

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rats"—as Dean likes to call them—is the only factor that clearly explains his extraordinary ascent and the striking inability of any other candidates to catch fire. Certainly it's got little to do with his stance on individual issues. Yes, Dean came out against the war resolution that other establishment candidates voted for. But Wesley Clark also opposed the resolution. And while Clark has been derided for supposedly flip-flopping on how he would have voted on the war resolution, Dean himself has split hairs. He supported an alternative resolution, sponsored by Sen. Joe Biden (D-Del.), that was only slightly less of a blank check than the one that actually passed. In most other respects, Dean's views are hardly different from his establishment rivals. He's more traditionally liberal on tax cuts (he'd repeal all of them, where Lieberman and Edwards would keep the middle-class cuts), but of the five major candidates, his health-care proposal is the least radical. His ideas to expand federal aid for child care and higher education are, as Ryan Lizza pointed out in *The New Republic* recently, rather Clintonesque. Despite efforts by centrist intellectuals and some journalists to limn his candidacy as a liberal-versus-center battle, issue by issue, it doesn't add up. If voters had wanted a left-liberal candidate, Dennis Kucinich or Al Sharpton would be leading the polls. Dean's supporters are not stupid. They know that in Dean, they are getting a flinty, balanced-budget governor who opposes gun control and favors welfare reform. But that's not the source of their admiration. Dean's supporters love him because, unlike everyone else in those endless debates, he's not tainted by association with the hapless Washington establishment.

But the Democrats' grassroots aren't the only ones who find the establishment lacking. Increasingly, the establishment finds itself lacking, too. The Medicare debacle, in some ways the party's signal defeat of the last three years, seems to have made a particular impact. "It illustrated to them that it was possible to bypass the Democratic Party on legislation, even on an issue that they believed they were the ultimate arbiter of," says Chris Jennings. Whereas Senate Democrats were afraid to oppose flat-out any bill that offered hundreds of billions in benefits to seniors, top Democrats in the House took a close look and decided to dig in their heels. The lock-step Republican majority passed the bill anyway, but many observers noted that, under pressure from House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, only 16 Democrats voted for the bill—drawing a clear line in the sand on a piece of legislation which now faces growing criticism from those it was supposed to benefit.

There are also the first hints that Washington's Democrats have learned a thing or two from the conservative insurgents who displaced them. In early December, I sat down with John Podesta, who was the last chief of staff to serve under Clinton, in the sparsely-furnished corner office of his new think tank, the Center for American Progress. "Good riddance," he replied when asked about the decline of the Democratic establishment. "It wasn't really working." Podesta is one of a small but growing group of Washington Democrats who have begun to recognize not only the depth of their disarray, but also of how badly equipped the party is to change. And they've taken the first steps towards building the kind of institutions that sustained conservatives during the 1970s and 1980s. Podesta, like the men who founded the key advocacy think-tanks on the right, is a political operative, not an academic. (He holds a law degree, but no Ph.D.—a credential required for permanent employment at a place like Brookings.) Instead of monographs, his think tank produces op-ed-style policy briefs and the "Progress Report," a trenchant, opinionated roundup of Republican legislation and policies produced daily by the communications staff. Meanwhile, a new wave of the so-called 527 organizations—each a coalition of Democratic-leaning interest groups, including labor—have sopped up the funds that used to fill the DNC's soft-money accounts. And instead of blowing it all on television ads, as the party did for so many years, most of the 527s have funneled the cash into massive, well-coordinated turnout and voter contact operations in preparation for the 2004 elections.

Increasingly, Washington Democrats have begun to understand what Dean's candidacy can offer them. For the last two decades, the establishment has tried to organize voters indirectly, through pollsters, pundits, and consultants rather than directly, through "people who connected with voters, who could control different power structures across the country," says one labor strategist. Unlike the old machines, Dean's burgeoning organization is fundamentally decentralized and democratic. (One popular Deaniac slogan: "Dean is the messenger. We are the message.") But by collaborating with a far-flung network of pro-Dean blogs and Web sites, while using such tools as Meetup.com to bring activists together on local college campuses and in neighborhood bars, Dean's campaign involves his supporters at the granular level, rather as Daley's aldermen and ward heelers did. "We didn't keep building the infrastructure of the party," notes Coelho, who many in the party still hold responsible for the Democrats flat-footedness leading up to the 1994 elections. "It's time to permit the system to move on. [Dean's people] are creating a new group that will take over at some point, and I think that when they do, our party will be stronger than in the past."

But even as Dean continues to occasionally bash Washington Democrats in public, his top staff—including his campaign co-chairman, Steve Grossman, a former DNC head—have spent the last few months quietly reaching out to them. And for good reason: Should Dean win both the nomination and, next fall, the presidency, he will face a massive, motivated, well-funded Republican establishment that will work every day to defeat his agenda, no matter how liberal or centrist it is. As disorganized as they are, Beltway Democrats still constitute a valuable reservoir of talent, experience, and money. Without a rebuilt, robust Democratic counter-establishment, Dean will be a monumental failure as president. Howard Dean needs the Washington Democrats, in other words, as much as they need him. ◆

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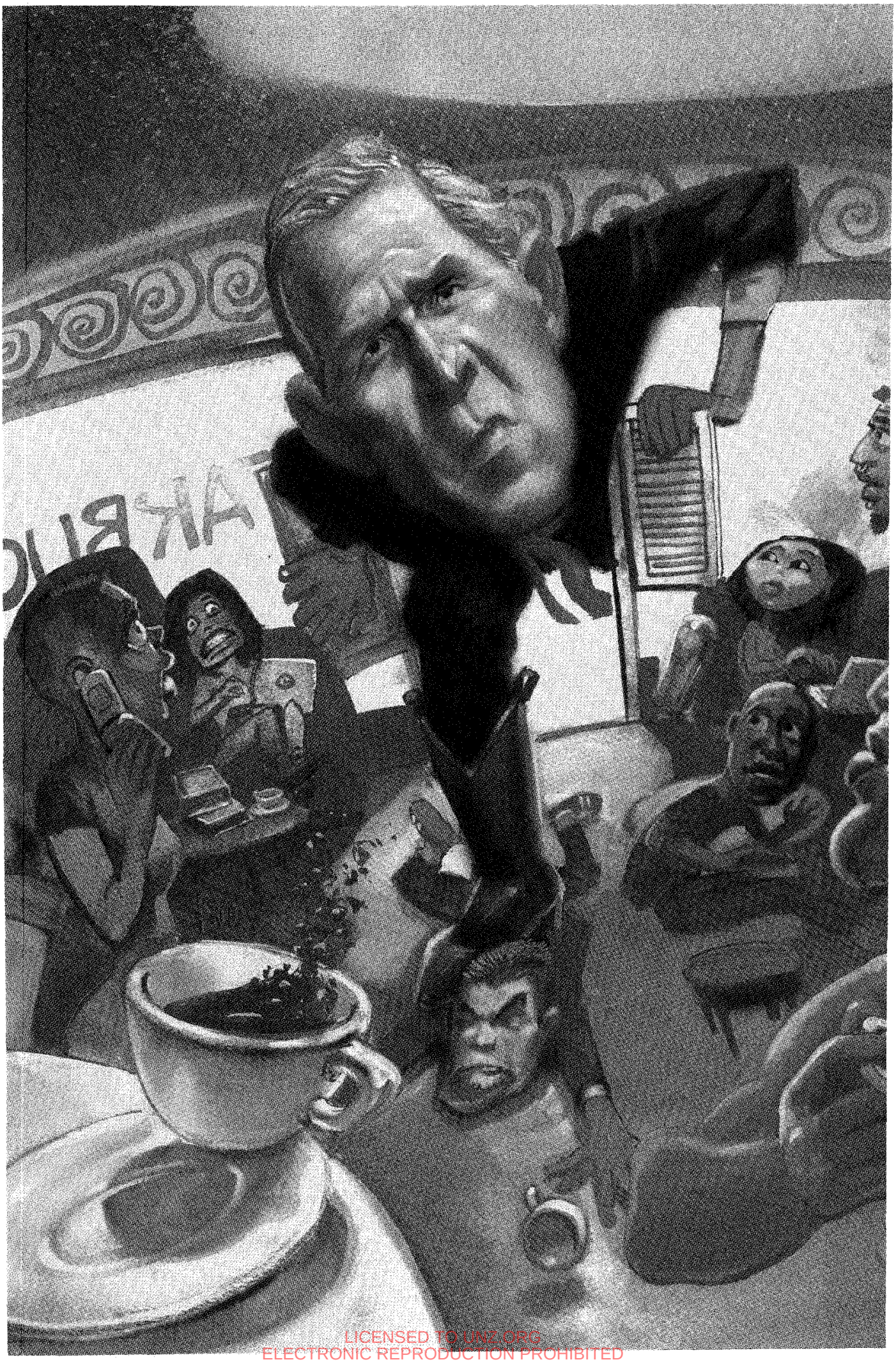

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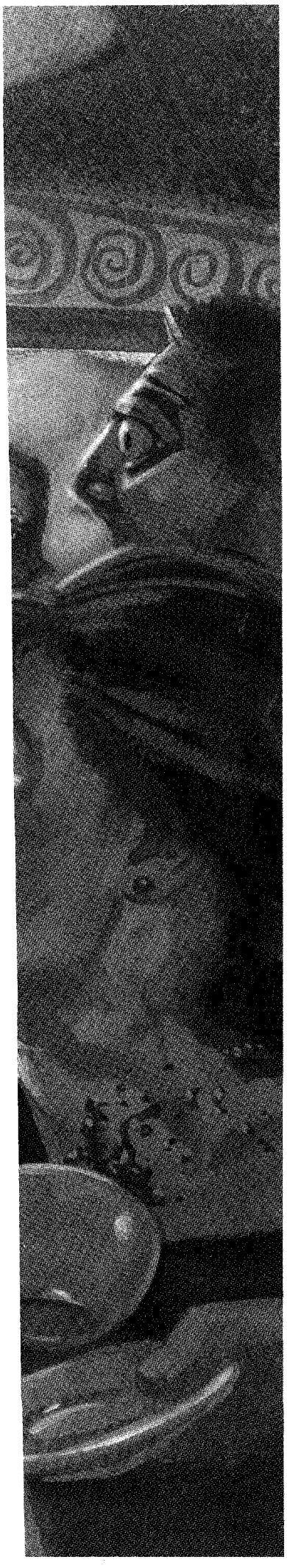

Creative Class War

How the GOP's anti-elitism could ruin America's economy.

By Richard Florida

Last March, I had the opportunity to meet Peter Jackson, director of *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy, at his film complex in lush, green, otherworldly-looking Wellington, New Zealand. Jackson has done something unlikely in Wellington, an exciting, cosmopolitan city of 900,000, but not one previously considered a world cultural capital. He has built a permanent facility there, perhaps the world's most sophisticated film-making complex. He did it in New Zealand concertedly and by design. Jackson, a Wellington native, realized what many American cities discovered during the '90s: Paradigm-busting creative industries could single-handedly change the ways cities flourish and drive dynamic, widespread economic change. It took Jackson and his partners a while to raise the resources, but they purchased an abandoned paint factory that, in a singular example of adaptive reuse, emerged as the film studio responsible for the most breathtaking trilogy of films ever made. He realized, he told me, that with the allure of the *Rings* trilogy, he could attract a diversely creative array of talent from all over the world to New Zealand; the best cinematographers, costume designers, sound technicians, computer graphic artists, model builders, editors, and animators.

Art by Fred Harper

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When I visited, I met dozens of Americans from places like Berkeley and MIT working alongside talented filmmakers from Europe and Asia, the Americans asserting that they were ready to relinquish their citizenship. Many had begun the process of establishing residency in New Zealand.

Think about this. In the industry most symbolic of America's international economic and cultural might, film, the greatest single project in recent cinematic history was internationally funded and crafted by the best filmmakers from around the world, but not in Hollywood. When Hollywood produces movies of this magnitude, it not only creates jobs for directors, actors, and key grips in California. Because of the astounding level of technical innovation which a project of this size requires, in such areas as computer graphics, sound design, and animation, it can germinate whole new companies and even new industries nationwide, just as George Lucas's *Star Wars* films fed the development of everything from video games to product tie-in marketing. But the lion's share of benefits from *The Lord of the Rings* is likely to accrue not to the United States but to New Zealand. Next, with a rather devastating symbolism, Jackson will remake *King Kong* in Wellington, with a budget running into upwards of $150 million.

Peter Jackson's power play hasn't been mentioned by any of the current candidates running for president. Yet the loss of U.S. jobs to overseas competitors is shaping up to be one of the defining issues of the 2004 campaign. And for good reason. Voters are seeing not just a decline in manufacturing jobs, but also the outsourcing of hundreds of thousands of white-collar brain jobs—everything from software coders to financial analysts for investment banks. These were supposed to be the "safe" jobs, for which high school guidance counselors steered the children of blue-collar workers into college to avoid their parents' fate.

But the loss of some of these jobs is only the most obvious—and not even the most worrying—aspect of a much bigger problem. Other countries are now encroaching more directly and successfully on what has been, for almost two decades, the heartland of our economic success — the creative economy.

Better than any other country in recent years, America has developed new technologies and ideas that spawn new industries and modernize old ones, from the Internet to big-box stores to innovative product designs. And these have proved principal force behind the U.S. economy's creation of more than 20 million jobs in the creative sector during the 1990s, even as it continued to shed manufacturing, agricultural, and other jobs.

We came up with these new technologies and ideas largely because we were able to energize and attract the best and the brightest, not just from just from our country but also from around the world. Talented, educated immigrants and smart, ambitious young Americans congregated, during the 1980s and 1990s, in and around a dozen U.S. city-regions. These areas became hothouses of innovation, the modern-day equivalents of Renaissance city-states, where scientists, artists, designers, engineers, financiers, marketers, and sundry entrepreneurs fed off each other's knowledge, energy, and capital to make new products, new services, and whole new industries. Cutting-edge entertainment in southern California. New financial instruments in New York. Computer products in northern California and Austin. Satellites and telecommunications in Washington, D.C. Software and innovative retail in Seattle. Biotechnology in Boston. The economic benefits of these advances soon spread to much of the rest of the country, as Ohio-born MBAs in Raleigh-Durham built credit-card call centers in Iowa, and Indian immigrant computer whizzes in Chicago devised innovative inventory software that brought new profitability to car factories in Ohio, Kentucky, and Tennessee.

But now the rest of the world has taken notice of our success and is trying to copy it. The present surge of outsourcing is the first step—or if you will, the first pincer of the claw. The more routinizable aspects of what we consider brainwork—writing computer code, analyzing X-rays—are being lured away by countries like India and Romania, which have lower labor costs and educated workforces large enough to do the job. Though alarming and disruptive, such outsourcing might be manageable if we could substitute a new tier of jobs derived from the new technologies and ideas coming out of our creative centers. But so far in this economic recovery, that hasn't happened.

What should really alarm us is that our capacity to so adapt is being eroded by a different kind of competition—the other pincer of the claw—as cities in other developed countries transform themselves into magnets for higher value-added industries. Cities from Sydney to Brussels to Dublin to Vancouver are fast becoming creative-class centers to rival Boston, Seattle, and Austin. They're doing it through a variety of means—from government-subsidized labs to partnerships between top local universities and industry. Most of all, they're luring foreign creative talent, including our own. The result is that the sort of high-end, high-margin creative industries that used to be the United States' province and a crucial source of our prosperity have begun to move overseas. The most advanced cell phones are being made in Salo, Finland, not Chicago. The world's leading airplanes are being designed and built in Toulouse and Hamburg, not Seattle.

As other nations become more attractive to mobile immi-

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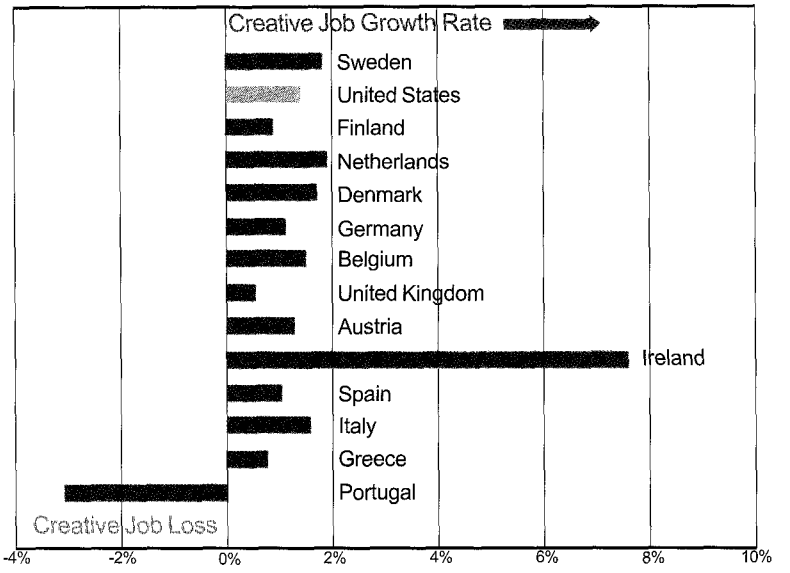
grant talent, America is becoming less so. A recent study by the National Science Board found that the U.S. government issued 74,000 visas for immigrants to work in science and technology in 2002, down from 166,000 in 2001—an astonishing drop of 55 percent in a single year, and matched by similar, though smaller-scale, declines in other categories of talented immigrants, from finance experts to entertainers.

Part of this contraction is derived from what we hope are short-term security concerns—as federal agencies have restricted visas from certain countries after September 11. More disturbingly, we find indications that fewer educated foreigners are choosing to come to the United States. Most of the decline in science and technology immigrants in the National Science Board study, for instance, was due to a drop in applications.

America's Creative Competitors



The horizontal axis plots the rates at which countries are gaining or losing creative jobs, between 1995 and the latest year for which data is available.

The vertical axis ranks selected countries by their current "creativity index"—a measure of cultural tolerance, creative talent, economic and scientific innovations—with Sweden being ranked first and Portugal last.

SOURCE: Richard Florida & Irene Tinagali, "Europe in the Creative Age," and elaborated from the International Labour Organization/ LABORSFA Labour Statistics Database

Why would talented foreigners avoid us? In part, because other countries are simply doing a better, more aggressive job of recruiting them. The technology bust also plays a role. There are fewer jobs for computer engineers, and even top foreign scientists who might still have their pick of great cutting-edge research positions are less likely than they were a few years ago to make millions through tech-industry partnerships.

But having talked to hundreds of talented professionals in half dozen countries over the past year, I'm convinced that the biggest reason has to do with the changed political and policy landscape in Washington. In the 1990s, the federal government focused on expanding America's human capital and interconnectedness to the world—crafting international trade agreements, investing in cutting edge R&D, subsidizing higher education and public access to the Internet, and encouraging immigration. But in the last three years, the government's attention and resources have shifted to older sectors of the economy, with tariff protection and subsidies to extractive industries. Meanwhile, Washington has stunned scientists across the world with its disregard for consensus scientific views when those views conflict with the interests of favored sectors (as has been the case with the issue of global climate change). Most of all, in the wake of 9/11, Washington has inspired the fury of the world, especially of its educated classes, with its my-way-or-the-highway foreign policy. In effect, for the first time in our history, we're saying to highly mobile and very finicky global talent, "You don't belong here."

Obviously, this shift has come about with the changing of the political guard in Washington, from the internationalist Bill Clinton to the aggressively unilateralist George W. Bush. But its roots go much deeper, to a tectonic change in the country's political-economic demographics. As many have noted, America is becoming more geographically polarized, with the culturally more traditionalist, rural, small-town, and exurban "red" parts of the country increasingly voting Republican, and the culturally more progressive urban and suburban "blue" areas going ever more Democratic. Less noted is the degree to which these lines demarcate a growing economic divide, with "blue" patches representing the talent-laden, immigrant-rich creative centers that have largely propelled economic growth, and the "red" parts representing the economically lagging hinterlands. The migrations that feed creative-center economies are also exacerbating the contrasts. As talented individuals, eager for better career opportunities and more adventurous, diverse lifestyles, move to the innovative cities, the hinterlands become even more culturally conservative.

Now, the demographic dynamic which propelled America's creative economy has produced a political dynamic that could choke that economy off. Though none of the candidates for president has quite framed it that way, it's what's really at stake in the 2004 elections.

Yankees doodle

Roger Pederson is one of the leading researchers in the field of stem cells. But in 2001, he left his position at the University of California, San Francisco, to take up residency at the Centre for Stem Cell Biology Medicine at Cambridge University in the United Kingdom. His departure illustrates how the creative economy is being reshaped—by our competitors growing savvy and by our own cluelessness. Pederson bolted because the British government aggressively recruit-

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ed him, but also because the Bush administration put heavy restrictions on stem-cell research. "I have a soft spot in my heart for America," he recently told *Wired* magazine. "But the U.K. is much better for this research.... more working capital." And, he continued, "they haven't made such a political football out of stem cells."

Stem cells are vital to the body because of their ability to develop any kind of tissue. Scientists play a similar role in the economy; their discoveries (silicon circuitry, gene splicing) are the source of most big new industries (personal computers, biotechnology). Unfortunately, Roger Pederson's departure may be among the first of many. "Over the last few years, as the conservative movement in the U.S. has become more entrenched, many people I know are looking for better lives in Canada, Europe, and Australia," a noted entymologist at the University of Illinois emailed me recently: "From bloggers and programmers to members of the National Academy I have spoken with, all find the Zeitgeist alien and even threatening. My friend says it is like trying to research and do business in the 21st century in a culture that wants to live in the 19th, empires, bibles and all. There is an E.U. fellowship through the European Molecular Biology Laboratory in Amsterdam that everyone and their mother is trying to get."

But the bigger problem isn't that Americans are going elsewhere. It's that for the first time in modern memory, top scientists and intellectuals from elsewhere are choosing not to come here. We are so used to thinking that the world's leading creative minds, like the world's best basketball and baseball players, always want to come to the States, while our people go overseas only if they are second-rate or washed up, that it's hard to imagine it could ever be otherwise. And it's still true that because of our country's size, its dynamism, its many great universities, and large government research budgets, we're the Yankees of science. But like the Yankees, we've been losing some of our best players. And even great teams can go into slumps.

The altered flow of talent is already beginning to show signs of crimping the scientific process. "We can't hold scientific meetings here [in the United States] anymore because foreign scientists can't get visas," a top oceanographer at the University of California at San Diego recently told me. The same is true of graduate students, the people who do the legwork of scientific research and are the source of many powerful ideas. The graduate students I have taught at several major universities — Ohio State, Harvard, MIT, Carnegie Mellon — have always been among the first to point out the benefits of studying and doing research in the United States. But their impressions have changed dramatically over the past year. They now complain of being hounded by the immigration agencies as potential threats to security, and that America is abandoning its standing as an open society. Many are thinking of leaving for foreign schools and, they tell me that their friends and colleagues back home are no longer interested in coming to the United States for their education but are actively seeking out universities in Canada, Europe, and elsewhere.

It would be comforting to think that keeping out the foreigners would mean more places for homegrown talent in our top graduate programs and research faculties. Alas, it doesn't work that way: We have many brilliant young people, but not nearly enough to fill all the crucial slots. Last year, for instance, a vast, critical artificial intelligence project at MIT had to be jettisoned because the university couldn't find enough graduate students who weren't foreigners and who could thus clear new security regulations.

Nor is this phenomenon limited to science; other sectors are beginning to suffer. The pop-music magazine *Tracks*, for instance, recently reported that a growing number of leading world musicians, from South African singer and guitarist Vusi Mahlasela to the Bogota-based electronica collective Sidestepper, have had to cancel their American tours because they were refused visas, while Youssou N'Dour, perhaps the globe's most famous world music artist, cancelled his largest-ever U.S. tour last spring to protest the invasion of Iraq.

These may seem small signs, but they're not. America's music industry has been, for decades, the world's standard setter. The songs of American artists are heard on radio stations from Caracas to Istanbul; their soundtracks are an integral part of the worldwide appeal of American movies. The profits earned from American music exports help keep America's balance-of-payments deficits from getting too far into the red zone. Yet part of what makes American music so vital is its ability to absorb and incorporate the sounds of other countries—from American hip-hop picking up Caribbean Reggae and Indian Bhangra beats, to hard rock musicians using industrial instrumentation from Germany. For American artists and fans, not being able to see touring foreign bands is the equivalent of the computer industry not getting access to the latest chips: It dulls the competitive edge.

Our loss of access to high-level foreign talent hasn't drawn much attention from political leaders and the media, for understandable reasons: We seem to have bigger, more immediate problems, from the war on terrorism to the loss of jobs in the manufacturing, service, and creative sectors to China, India, and Mexico. But just as our obsession with the Soviet Union in the last years of the Cold War caused us to miss the emerging economic challenge of Japan, our eyes may not be on the biggest threat to our economic well-being.

For several years now, my colleagues and I have been mea-

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suring the underlying factors common to those American cities and regions with the highest level of creative economic growth. The chief factors we've found are: large numbers of talented individuals, a high degree of technological innovation, and a tolerance of diverse lifestyles. Recently my colleague Irene Tinagli of Carnegie Mellon and I have applied the same analysis to northern Europe, and the findings, which are detailed in the chart on page 33, are startling. The playing field is much more level than you might think. Sweden tops the United States on this measure, with Finland, the Netherlands, and Denmark close behind. The United Kingdom and Belgium are also doing well. And most of these countries, especially Ireland, are becoming more creatively competitive at a faster rate than the United States.

Though the data are not as perfect at the metropolitan level, other cities are also beating us for fresh new talent, diversity, and brainpower. Vancouver and Toronto are set to take off: Both city-regions have a higher concentration of immigrants than New York, Miami, or Los Angeles. So too are Sydney and Melbourne. As creative centers, they would rank alongside Washington, D.C. and New York City. Many of these places also offer such further inducements as spectacular waterfronts, beautiful countryside, and great outdoor life. They're safe. They're rarely at war. These cities are becoming the global equivalents of Boston or San Francisco, transforming themselves from small, obscure places to creative hotbeds that draw talent from all over—including your city and mine.

Catch the waves

The sudden stalling of our creative economy threatens to undermine two decades of progress. Twenty years ago, America's economy had hit a crisis point, with record unemployment, stagnant productivity, a rusting industrial base, and an oil crisis that highlighted a dangerous dependence upon raw materials whose supply it could not necessarily guarantee.

But underneath the surface, some interesting things were happening. Previous investments in scientific research by both government and industry were yielding new technologies, from inexpensive computer chips to fiber optics. New financial instruments and practices were making capital more available for innovative new ventures. American film, television, and music were finding new export markets. U.S. corporations, spurred by competition from Japan and guided by best-selling books like Tom Peters's *In Search of Excellence*, were restructuring, pushing decision-making down the chain of command and into the hands of high-initiative line employees. And everywhere, economists and managers were talking about the need for more "human capital"—the buzz phrase meaning educated workers who could think on their feet.

Eventually, supply met demand thanks to two great migrations: first, a wave of foreign immigrants, following a loosening of immigration laws in the late 1960s. By the 1980s, more than six million immigrants settled in the United States, the greatest number in half a century. In the 1990s, 12 million more arrived. Most were unskilled and found work in factories, restaurants, and construction. But many came with good schooling and went into our universities and leading industries. Today, 11 percent of foreign-born adults in the United States have a graduate or professional degree, compared to only 9 percent of natives. Most of these educated immigrants originally congregated in a handful of big vibrant cities such as New York, Chicago, San Francisco, and Los Angeles, but many have since moved to smaller hotspots like Tucson, Chapel Hill, and Colorado Springs.

Without these immigrants, our high-tech economy would be unthinkable. Intel, Sun Microsystems, Google: All were founded or co-founded by immigrants from places like Russia, India, and Hungary. Nearly a third of all businesses founded in Silicon Valley during the 1990s were started by Chinese- or Indian-born entrepreneurs, according to the detailed statistical research of Annalee Saxenian of the University of California at Berkeley. And thousands upon thousands more constitute the technical core of our high-tech economy.

The second great migration was an internal one: Millions of young, energetic and talented Americans from traditional industrial centers, small towns, and rural areas, packed up their Hondas and moved to more-thriving metro areas—generally the same ones that the immigrants came to. These native-born migrants helped to design and then feed the emerging creative industries that during the 1990s would come to define the age.

This influx of talent turned America's creative centers into boomtowns. Salaries skyrocketed, followed by housing prices—especially those in the funky inner-city neighborhoods and gracious close-in suburbs favored by the product designers, video editors, hedge-fund analysts, and marketing consultants who made up this emerging new creative class. The rising living costs and go-go lifestyles engendered by the incoming creative class in turn drove out some of the lesser-educated natives, and even many of these creative migrants eventually had their fill and returned to their hometowns. The statistician Robert Cushing has come up with telling evidence of the economic impacts of these reciprocal migrations. Using Internal Revenue Service data, he found that families moving from Austin, a high-tech boomtown, to slower-growth Kansas City in the 1990s earned an average of $25,912 a year. Those going in the other direction, from Kansas City to Austin, earned over $65,000. He found similar disparities between Austin and other older cities: Cleveland, Louisville, Indianapolis, St. Louis, and Pittsburgh.

But it's not as if the Clevelands and Kansas Cities didn't advance at all. Most added some jobs thanks to local nodes of creativity, such as university-connected medical centers, or managed not to lose as many jobs in their existing companies as they might have absent the help of innovations—primarily information technology—that the creative centers gave birth to. Average incomes in these places rose more slowly, or in some cases declined, but people's purchasing power generally increased, again thanks to creative-center innovations. Patrons of 7-Elevens in Moberly, Mo., could pick up a Motorola cell phone designed by Chinese-born engi-

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neers in suburban Chicago for $30, or order any number of ever-lower-priced goods from Seattle-based Amazon.com (founded by the son of a Cuban immigrant) using ever-cheaper computers purchased at CompUSA, headquartered in Dallas.

The big sort

These migrations had not only economic consequences but cultural ones. The last 20 years has seen the rise of the "culture wars"—between those who value traditional virtues, and others drawn to new lifestyles and diversity of opinion. In truth, this clash mostly played out among intellectuals of the left and right; as sociologist Alan Wolfe has shown, most Americans manage a subtle balance between the two tendencies. Still, the cleavages exist, roughly paralleling the ideologies of the two political parties. And increasingly in the 1990s, they expressed themselves geographically, as more and more Americans chose to live in places that suited their culture and lifestyle preferences.

This movement of people is what the journalist Bill Bishop and I have referred to as the Big Sort, a sifting with enormous political and cultural implications, which has helped to give rise to what political demographer James Gimpel of the University of Maryland calls a "patchwork nation." City by city, neighborhood to neighborhood, Gimpel and others have found, our politics are becoming more concentrated and polarized. We may live in a 50-50 country, but the actual places we live (inner-ring v. outer-ring suburbs, San Francisco v. Fresno) are much more likely to distribute their loyalties 60-40, and getting more lopsided rather than less.

These divisions arise not from some master plan but from millions upon millions of individual choices. Individuals are sorting themselves into communities of like-minded people which validate their choices and identities. Gay sales reps buy ramshackle old houses in the city and renovate them; straight, married sales reps purchase newly-built houses with yards on the suburban fringe. Conservative tech geeks move to Dallas, while liberal ones are more likely to go to San Francisco. Young African Americans who can write code find their way to Atlanta or Washington, D.C., while whites with the same education and skills are more likely to migrate to Seattle or Austin. Working-class Southern Californian whites priced out of the real estate market and perhaps feeling overwhelmed by the influx of Mexicans move to suburban Phoenix. More than ever before, those who possess the means move to the city and neighborhood that reinforces their social and cultural view of the world.

And while there are no hard and fast rules—some liberals prefer suburbs of modest metro areas with lots of churches and shopping malls, some conservatives like urban neighborhoods with coffee shops—in general, these cultural and lifestyle preferences overlap with political ones (which the political parties have accentuated with computer-assisted redistricting). In 1980, according to Robert Cushing's detailed analysis of the election results, there wasn't a significant difference between how high-tech and low-tech regions voted for president; the difference between the parties still depended upon other factors. By 2000, however, the 21 regions with the largest concentrations of the creative class and the highest-tech economies voted Democratic at rates 17 percent above the national average. Regions with lower levels of creative people and low-tech economies, along with rural America, went Republican. In California, the most Democratic of states, George Bush won the state's 14 low-tech regions and rural areas by 210,000 votes. Al Gore took the 12 high-tech regions and their suburbs by over 1.5 million.

Mutual contempt

Bill Clinton was, in many ways the midwife of the new creative economy. Present at the birth of the '90s boom, he recognized it quickly for what it was and helped spur it by such projects as wiring poor and middle-class school classrooms around the country for the Internet and beating back Republican efforts to cut immigration. For this, he was beloved not only by creatives, but also by many of those in Red America whom he convinced would benefit from the new economy.

But he also personally symbolized the creative-class archetype—its libertine character, its cleverness, its global-mindedness. For this, he drew the lasting enmity of many millions of those in the "other" America. It's often been said that Clinton was the embodiment of the '60s, and one's position for or against him revealed one's attitude towards that era. It's perhaps more precise to say that with his constant hyping new technologies and "bridge to the twenty-first century" rhetoric, Clinton was the embodiment of what the '60s became—the creative class '90s, hip but pro-growth, open-minded and progressive but ambitious.

While Clinton and the Democrats increasingly drew their support from the high-tech parts of the country, the Republicans increasingly came to represent the low-tech areas. Republican leaders like Tom Delay and Dick Armey were beginning, during the early 1990s, to articulate the cultural and political antagonism Red America felt towards the emerging creative-class culture. But the politician who most skillfully spoke to these grievances was George W. Bush.

Clinton's whole life is a testimony to the power of education to change class. Bush prides himself on the idea that his Yale education had no effect on how he sees things. Clinton was a famous world traveler, appreciative of foreign cultures and ideas. Bush, throughout his life, has been indifferent if not hostile to all of that. Clinton, especially in the early years of his administration, had the loose, unstructured management style of an academic department or a dot-com—manic work hours, meetings that went on forever, lots of diffuse power centers, young people running around in casual clothing, and a constant reappraising of plans and strategies. The Bush management style embodies the pre-creative corporate era—formal, hierarchal, with decision-making concentrated in the hands of only the most senior executives. Clinton was happy in Hollywood and vacationed in Martha's Vineyard. Bush can't wait to get back to Crawford. Clinton reveled in the company of writers, artists, scientists, and members of the intellectual elite. Bush has little tolerance for

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them. Clinton, in his rhetoric and policies, wanted to bring the gifts of the creative class—high technology, a tolerant culture—to the hinterlands. Bush aimed to bring the values and economic priorities of the hinterlands to that ultimate creative center, Washington, D.C.

As president, Bush chose a group of senior advisors whose economic backgrounds have a century-old flavor. His vice president is an oil man. His treasury secretary, John Snow, is a railroad man. The White House's economic and fiscal policies have been similarly designed to provide life support for these aging red-state industries: $190 billion in subsidies for farmers; tariffs for steel; subsidies, tax breaks, and regulatory relief for logging, mining, coal, and natural gas. Even Bush's tax policy shows the same old-economy preference. His dividend tax cut was supported by mainstream, blue-chip companies, which stood to gain, but opposed by high-tech executives, whose company stocks seldom pay dividends.

Thanks to the GOP takeover of Washington, and the harsh realities of the Big Sort, economically lagging parts of the country now wield ultimate political power, while the creative centers—source of most of America's economic growth—have virtually none. Democrats Dianne Feinstein and Barbara Boxer speak for Silicon Valley and Hollywood. New York's Charles Schumer and Hillary Clinton, also Democrats, represent New York's finance and publishing industries. Washington State, home to Starbucks and Microsoft, has two Democratic senators, Patty Murray and Maria Cantwell. Boston's Route 128 and Washington's high-tech Maryland suburbs are also represented by Democratic senators. It's hard to understate how little influence these senators have with the Bush White House and in the GOP-controlled Congress.

The new Ellis Island

You don't have to be a Democrat to recognize that the political polarization of America and GOP dominance of Washington are not necessarily good news for America's economic future. Yet it's clear that Democrats themselves don't quite get it.

All the current Democratic aspirants to the White House have whacked Bush for undermining our alliances and diplomatic capabilities through his unilateralism. A few, including Sen. John Kerry, have criticized the president as "anti-science." But none seems to have understood—or at least articulated—the disastrous economic consequences of these Know-Nothing views. In the post-1990s global economy, America must aggressively compete with other developed countries for the international talent that can spur new industries and new jobs. By thumbing our nose at the world and dismissing the consensus views of the scientific community, we are scaring off that talent and sending it to our competitors.

If there is any candidate who speaks for the creative class right now, it is Howard Dean. His educated, tech-savvy supporters and grass-roots, non-hierarchal campaign structure perfectly represent the creative economy. Yet his economic message has so far focused on luring swing-state unionists—criticizing Bush, for instance, for not extending steel tariffs.

America must not only stop making dumb mistakes, like starting trade wars with Europe and China; it must also put in place new policies that enhance our creative economy. Here, too, neither party quite gets it. Most of the Democratic candidates for president have rightly sounded the alarm about rising college-tuition costs and offered ideas to expand college access. That's well and good, but we need to think far, far bigger. Our research universities are immigrant magnets, the Ellis Islands of the 21st century. And, with the demand among our own citizens for elite education far outstripping the supply, we should embark on a massive university building spree, for which we will be paid back many-fold in future economic growth. Building some of these top-flight universities in struggling red-state regions might give their economies a shot at a better future and help bridge the growing political divide.

Democrats have understandably seized on the corporate outsourcing of jobs as a campaign issue. But let's get real: Demanding higher labor and environmental standards in trade agreements—the Democrats' favorite fix—is not going to keep software jobs from migrating to Eastern Europe. Our only hope is to strengthen our creative economy so that it produces more jobs to replace the ones we're losing. That will require taking on the Washington lobbyists who put the fix in for established industries at the expense of emerging ones. Millions of new jobs in the wireless networking field, for instance, could be created if unused broadcast spectrum, currently controlled by TV networks and the military, could be freed up. When's the last time you heard a presidential candidate talk about that?

It is a sad irony: America's creative economy sparked a demographic shift and a political polarization that now threaten to choke that economy off. What America desperately needs now is political leadership savvy enough to bridge that gap. To his credit, President Bush has made the Republican Party much more immigrant-friendly. But his talk about diversity seems almost entirely pitched to win the working-class Hispanic vote; he seems uninterested, to say the least, in changing other policies that are driving away the high-end immigrants and generally undermining the creative economy. To his credit, Howard Dean has tried to speak to his party of the need to put forth policies that appeal to citizens in both blue and red parts of the country. But as he showed with remarks about reaching out to guys with rebel flags on their pickups, he seems, to say the least, not to have found the language to do so.

The challenge for the GOP, if it wants to avoid running the economy into the ground, is to stop sneering at the elites, the better to win votes in their base, and to start paying attention to economic policies that might lift all boats. The challenge for Democrats, if they want to win, is to find ways of reaching out to the rest of the country, to convince at least some of its many regions that policies which operate to the interests of the creative class are in their interests as well. ◆

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Catch Me if You Can

If snaring Saddam was so important, why is Radovan Karadzic allowed to remain free?

By Russ Baker

Celebici is a remote gnat of a place. A few dozen houses and a church, a couple of hours up a rough road from the ragged Bosnian hills, surrounded by forested peaks. But it was as big as the headlines it generated when NATO-led forces staged Operation Daybreak there in February 2002, ostensibly hoping to net Radovan Karadzic, the still-at-large Bosnian Serb leader who had been indicted by the Hague's War Crimes Tribunal for helping lead a genocide in 1992-1995 that killed up to 200,000, mostly Bosnian Muslims. Helicopters disgorged black-masked troops who kicked in doors and blew open locks as they conducted a door-to-door search. They left empty-handed. Operation Daybreak remains the only serious action the West is known to have conducted to pick up Karadzic.

The international peacekeeping troops, known as SFOR, maintain an ongoing interest in Celebici. They reappeared the day after the initial February raid, and then again that summer—which seems a little strange since even if he was once there, Karadzic was hardly likely to return to a place that's already under such scrutiny. During my visit, villagers were initially wary, but ended up sharing salami and a cheese spread called *kajmak* with me, and talking freely about their life in a fishbowl. Within half an hour of my arrival, almost on cue, an SFOR vehicle entered the village and parked by the tiny church. But when I chatted up the German officers inside, they turned out to be on what certainly looked more like a sightseeing tour than a sophisticated operation, even if getting to Celebici takes some resolve and a lot of bouncing up a challenging path. They admitted to me that most SFOR troops know very little about Bosnia, and are hardly equipped for, or looking forward to, a vigorous action of the sort necessary to bag Karadzic. After talking with locals and Western officials in Bosnia, I started to suspect that the troops still hang around Celebici because they don't have any more current idea of where Karadzic might be.

Five years ago, Karadzic's capture seemed imminent. In 1998, the-then international High Representative to Bosnia, Carlos Westendorp, declared that Karadzic's power base was shrinking rapidly and that he probably would surrender within a month. Elisabeth Rehn, the U.N. envoy to Bosnia, said she suspected Karadzic would be in the Hague "quite soon." Like Osama bin Laden, Karadzic is well-known and physically distinctive: A tall man with a big belly, a dimpled chin, and a dramatic gray bouffant, he ought to be difficult to hide. But for a seeming eternity, he's eluded some of the most technologically sophisticated man-hunting teams in the country. Now, with American intelligence drained from the area to support the military in Iraq, the prospects for his capture look dimmer than ever. The evidence suggests that Americans and their Western allies have simply given up the hunt.

One really shouldn't engage in atrocity one-upmanship, but it's arguable that compared with such more

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famous current and recent fugitives as Osama bin Laden and Saddam Hussein, Karadzic, wins the odiousness sweepstakes. A remarkably public front man for genocide in the former Yugoslavia, the disarmingly avuncular Bosnian Serb leader dispensed lies to packed press conferences while his soldiers laid siege to Sarajevo (where he previously worked at the main hospital) and went village to village, locking families inside houses and setting them afire, bringing women to detention camps where they could be mass-raped. Along with his general and fellow fugitive Ratko Mladic, Karadzic is accused of responsibility for all manner of atrocity, most notably the 1995 massacre of about 8,000 Muslim men and boys in the U.N. safe area of Srebrenica, the single worst crime committed in Europe since World War II.

Now that U.S. troops have captured Saddam Hussein, and the Bush administration has trumpeted that capture as both a justification for the war and a key step toward winning the peace, it has become logically impossible to justify why Radovan Karadzic is allowed to roam free. Like Saddam, he is a genocidal murderer. Like Saddam, his most horrible crimes were committed a decade ago. And like Saddam, the fact that he remains at large is an enormous obstacle to democracy and a cause for instability throughout a strategically crucial region. If Saddam in jail is a victory for human rights, Karadzic on the lam is an affront to them.

Aura of invincibility

To begin with, Karadzic's liberty serves as an irritant to the open wound that is Bosnia. Eight years ago the Dayton Peace Accord commenced a process that was supposed to lead to reunification, but despite the efforts of hundreds of foreign aid workers and the expenditure of more than $5 billion dollars, the "country" remains fractious and fractured. Efforts to create unity and long-term peace have been frustrated by the continued dominance in the ethnic Serbian state-within-a-state (known as Republika Srpska), of a corrupt clique. This cartel, which is said to be controlled by Karadzic and to be dedicated largely to obstructing the reforms essential to his capture, has frustrated efforts to create unity and long-term peace. The poison spills across national boundaries—there are even believed to be ties to the March 2003 assassination of the reformist prime minister, Zoran Djindjic, next door in another country, the rump of the former Yugoslavia, now called Serbia and Montenegro. And, of course, the fate of the entire area holds lessons for other Western efforts at democracy—and nation-building, such as those in Iraq and Afghanistan.

To skeptical observers, the strategy of Karadzic and his supporters is to outwait the international community, and then, when the foreigners leave, to annex the Serbian enclave of Bosnia to Serbia proper, despite the fact that it once housed huge numbers of ethnic Muslims and Croats, who have been slowly returning to their prewar homes.

Karadzic's continued freedom gives those returnees a sense that all has not yet been put right, while his aura of invincibility has grown among Serbia's Serbs and the 700,000 Bosnian Serbs. Among Bosnian Muslims, constant speculation and conspiracy theories abound—especially the belief that the international community leadership does not want Karadzic caught.

Indeed, when the United States and the United Nations were working to end the Bosnian war in Dayton in 1995, Richard Holbrooke, assistant secretary of state and Clinton's chief negotiator, led Karadzic to believe that if the Serb retreated from the political scene, he would not be arrested. U.N. High Representative Carl Bildt has said publicly that he was the one who made the deal with Karadzic.

But Holbrooke and other officials have since said repeatedly that the United States ought to lead the hunt to get Karadzic, who, by playing the role of a political puppetmaster, has undermined the stability of the region. It is NATO, especially the American military, that has been most resistant to taking the risks necessary to catch Karadzic.

"When we first went in, the Pentagon thought that what we had to do was hard enough," said retired Gen. William Nash, former commander of U.S. forces in Bosnia and now a senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations. NATO became more slightly more aggressive, and caught some war criminals, after Gen. Wesley Clark took over in 1997, but never got Karadzic—and never seemed willing to risk a single casualty. The Bush administration came to office initially intending to leave the Balkans altogether. That never quite happened, but in the wake of September 11 and the war in Iraq, most U.S. troops in Bosnia have been pulled out.

Oblique Frenchmen

Everyone in Bosnia, it seems, can describe with certainty Karadzic's current circumstances. Want to know how he's protected? Karadzic is guarded at all times by 90 heavily-armed, itchy-fingered veterans. *Wait. Take Two*: He's largely on his own, with a tiny entourage. His location? He lives in the woods. *Correction*: He lives in an apartment in a small city. His cover? He goes about disguised as a priest. *Um, actually*, he's had plastic surgery. What about his family relations? He hasn't seen his wife in years. *Wrong*: He sees her regularly.

The rumors, sometimes published, and sometimes attributed to "reliable sources," insist that Karadzic only moves about at night, that he stays close to the borders, that decoy look-alikes (à la Saddam) abound, that he's cocooned by a security system comprising a corps of bodyguards in his immediate vicinity and two outer layers of locals and police serving as an advance warning system in the event of a capture attempt.

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There are many obstacles to finding Karadzic, some of them substantial. He is traveling in a region largely hostile to outsiders in which he is a kind of ethnic folk hero. He is well funded, and, through his political party, SDS, and the remnants of the Bosnian Serb army, he has a complex infrastructure at his disposal, largely dedicated to keeping him out of the reaches of westerners. But perhaps the largest obstacle is that the United States and its allies have not dedicated real resources to chasing him down.

Many of SFOR's soldiers—13,000 troops from 35 countries, down from a high of 60,000 after the war—share no common language, and those few who can speak to contingents from other countries aren't necessarily inclined to do so. Each contingent has gotten a reputation. American troops—now just 1,500, all national guardsmen, dentists from Ohio and laborers from New York—are not exactly Special Forces quality, and tend to stay pretty close to base. Italian and French troops like to live it up and have perhaps gotten too cozy with some locals. The Brits are the most enthusiastic about actually doing something. And, given their experience amongst a hostile, armed population in Northern Ireland, they're the best prepared—and show it through deft use of intelligence, and of lightning fast raids. So far, they have apprehended most of the war criminals—half of the 24 arrests officially reported by SFOR to date have come in their zone.

But the areas where Bosnians suspect Karadzic is hiding are controlled by Italian, French, and German troops, none of whom seem eager to fire their guns. The Germans I met in Celebici made clear that it would absolutely not be desirable, for obvious historical reasons, to have Germany in the forefront of a bloody international military incident that involves capturing someone accused of murdering large numbers of innocent people. The French, technically in charge of the area, have been historically close with the Serbs and opposed the creation of the Hague Tribunal. Their personnel have already been accused on several occasions of compromising operations. In 1996, the United States called off a planned military operation because of suspected French leaks, and a French army officer was jailed in 2001 for handing the Serbs NATO military information in 1998 that was relevant to upcoming bombing raids in Kosovo. On the morning of the Celebici raid, according to military sources, a French officer took a call from a Bosnian Serb policeman inquiring about an unusually large SFOR presence. In the conversation, which was monitored by peacekeeping forces, the Frenchman obliquely referred to the area being of interest, "today in particular."

Perhaps as troubling, tours of duty are fairly short, so most SFOR troops leave right about the time they're starting to know their way around. The secretive SFOR intelligence units, comprised largely of American and British agents, have been decimated by redirection to Iraq, and those who remain are tasked largely with keeping tabs on groups that have ties to Islamic guerillas. No one is more frustrated than the staff of the Hague Tribunal. With no authority over SFOR, they can't tell it what to do, and SFOR sends out mixed signals all the time, sometimes claiming that capturing Karadzic is a priority, sometimes noting that capturing him is the responsibility of the local police.

The latter idea is a laugh, of course, as I learned on my visit to Pale, Karadzic's wartime capital just outside Sarajevo, and home to his wife, Ljiljana. The friendly folks at the European Union Police Mission, whose job is to monitor and guide the development of an honest, effective police force, knew nothing about where I might find Mrs. Karadzic. Next door at the town police station, the deputy commander said that monitoring her whereabouts was a priority, but when I asked where Pale's most famous resident currently lived, the commander had to consult a subordinate, who came up with two addresses. Both turned out to be wrong. At the radio station owned by Karadzic's daughter, I was told that she—perhaps together with her mother—was away on holiday. Holiday! Did any authorities have any idea where they were vacationing? Or whether they might not be spending quality time with a tall gray-haired man with a cleft chin?

Capturing Karadzic is especially challenging because ordinary people revere him and because some extraordinarily bad and powerful people are joined with him at the hip.

Everywhere one travels on both sides of the border between Bosnia and Serbia, and in neighboring Montenegro, where Karadzic was actually born and raised, one finds Karadzic a kind of folk hero, celebrated for ostensibly defending orthodoxy against Muslim aggression and thereby playing a righteous role in what amounts to a 500-year-old quarrel. The Hague's evidence of his war crimes is dismissed as exaggerated, biased, or trumped up. His calls for a single country uniting all ethnic Serbs, coupled with his credentials as a psychiatrist and author of poems, folk songs and children's books, have been used effectively to polish his local image as a hero. (His former information minister is even publishing a book of children's poetry that he says was written by Karadzic in hiding.) Calendars of Karadzic hang at bus stations; on Christmas Day, 2002, thousands of Bosnian Serbs received a text-message holiday greeting from Karadzic on their mobile phones. And last year, pro-Karadzic posters mysteriously appeared all over Banja Luka, though authorities, undoubtedly worried about the reactions of Western forces, had them removed within hours.

Ordinary people throughout Republika Srpska—and particularly in the eastern portion where Karadzic is believed to be—are petrified of showing the slightest sympathy with the goals of the Hague Tribunal. "At the Hague Tribunal, some [Bosnian Serb] witnesses

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have admitted to participating in war crimes, but there was completely no reaction here," I was told by Branko Todorovic, president of the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Republika Srpska. "War crimes are still seen as something positive, as a success, especially on the local level. Look at the work of people in the media, of intellectuals, the statements of political and religious leaders —you will not be able to see any serious attempt to deal with this topic or criticize the happenings in the war. Because on the local level we have people who are the decision-makers now and who were directly involved in those war crimes."

A most unusual monk

Many of the Serbs who defend Karadzic may be motivated less by nationalist fervor than by self-interest. Karadzic sat—and presumably continues to sit—at the nexus of an intricate web of political, legal, military/police, and financial power that gained considerable wealth through wartime profiteering and favorable treatment from the Karadzic and post-Karadzic regimes in Republika Srpska.

"The outcome of the entire war, and the cause, is a few businessmen who took advantage of nationalism to get rich," says a former high-ranking Bosnian Serb law enforcement official. Those businessmen, most of whom have close ties with Karadzic's ruling SDS, have moved on to illicit and black market activities, which constitute a considerable portion of the entire economy. Many government officials, including cabinet ministers, are deeply involved in the underground economy, and would potentially face charges and long prison sentences if the semi-independent republic were ever cleaned up.

Bosnian Serb military officials loyal to Karadzic have been repeatedly implicated in all manner of scandal, from supplying weapons and expertise to Saddam Hussein's regime to spying on SFOR troops and monitoring NATO forces throughout the Balkans. In the past year or so, Western forces in Bosnia have moved to crack down on the most corrupt among the army's top brass, but the institution remains loyal to Karadzic. Republika Srpska is the only part of the former Yugoslavia that has yet to arrest a single war crimes suspect —despite being required to do so under the Dayton accords.

Last year, Karadzic's political party, the SDS, gave in to NATO demands and announced that they were expelling Karadzic and others suspected of war crimes from their membership. But that expulsion was widely seen as strictly for show. According to local officials and intelligence sources, Karadzic continues to run the party, relying on trusted lieutenants to collect intelligence for him and transmit his written instructions through couriers to the party and government leadership. One top politician reported receiving a note from Karadzic chastising him for going to a mosque's foundation-laying ceremony.

Karadzic's cronies spend about $200,000 a month protecting him, according to foreign diplomats. A sort of medieval tithing system, enforced by tough guys, includes a "tax" collected by civilians carrying police identification and skimmed profits from foreign electricity sales. U.S. intelligence services have tracked gas from Saddam Hussein's Iraq to merchants and distributors with close links to the SDS leadership and Karadzic. Republika Srpska also makes donations to the Orthodox Church for the ostensible purpose of rebuilding religious structures destroyed in the war—donations that, by law, cannot be monitored or even audited; officials in the ethnic Serb capital of Banja Luka and foreign diplomats believe that some of this money finds its way to Karadzic.

Many Western officials believe the Orthodox Church is actually housing Karadzic. Several SFOR operations focused on church properties before being halted, presumably to avoid inflaming religious tensions. In March, Hague Prosecutor Carla Del Ponte said that monitored telephone communications had revealed that Karadzic was hiding at a mountaintop Orthodox monastery in Ostrog, northwest of the capital. Church officials denied sheltering Karadzic but praised him nonetheless.

Catch can

What is most disturbing about Radovan Karadzic's continued life on the lam is how well we understand its parameters. We know who supplies his funding and who coordinates his logistics. We know the region he is likely holed up in. We know the institutions (his party SDS and reactionary elements within Serbia) that provide him support, institutions which have sent initial signals that their support for Karadzic is beginning to wane. We even know, from the success of British troops and intelligence in bringing war criminals to justice, those methods of pursuit and bribery most likely to work in this part of Bosnia and Montenegro. Compared to Osama bin Laden or Saddam Hussein, finding Karadzic seems, if not easy, a comparatively attainable goal.

If capturing Saddam was as important a milestone for Iraq's future as the White House says it is, then what conceivable reason can there be for not putting some small fraction of that energy into getting Karadzic? Today, despite its professed commitment to tracking down dangerous tyrants and doing the right thing, the Bush administration parses the vague, malleable notion of "national security" to make one monster fair game, and another irrelevant. In the end, then, Radovan Karadzic, a war criminal of virtually unsurpassed atrociousness who continues to destabilize a volatile region, is allowed to roam free—not because we can't get him but because we have chosen not to. ◆

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Like Common People

What Paris Hilton and her friends really want

By Benjamin Wallace-Wells

During college, I dated a girl whose friends hailed from what might be called the Paris Hilton set: the socially connected children of New York's inherited wealth class. One day I found myself at an Upper East Side party celebrating the first anniversary of an oil heiress' debut. We got there early, and my girlfriend and the debutante chattered off to the kitchen to get drinks. It was a very nice apartment, but I'd seen a lot of very nice apartments, and I found this one to be unexpectedly unspectacular—a little ratty around the edges even, a lot of pillows and woven throws covering the aging fabric of the cushions. I sat with the heiress' two blond brothers—the older one an investment banker, the younger taking a break from investment banking to try to be a model—who kept up a laconic banter over my head.

They talked, almost wearily, about unsuccessfully trying to pick up the waitresses at the bar down the block; about the best restaurant bathrooms in which to blow cocaine; about a prep school friend who'd been pulled over for weaving along a Connecticut road and acted more drunk than he really was, hoping the cops would just write him up and not search him for the bag of weed he'd stuffed in his crotch. They had these brittle, smirking laughs. My girlfriend and the heiress came back with drinks for everyone; we sat around with the oldest money there is drinking Coors Light on ice, out of mugs. Somehow, I had expected martinis.

It was a strange evening. Demographically, there wasn't much to separate my own background from these heirs—many of my friends had grown up pretty rich, in the same zip code, had gone to the best private schools. My friends and I were the children of doctors, lawyers and bankers—competitive, high achieving kids. But we were also only second- and third- generation Americans, the children and grandchildren of Jewish and Asian immigrants, and we had been raised with the understanding that we had been born during the upswing of our family epic, bound to higher achievement than even our own (by any standard, inordinately successful) fathers and mothers. We also had no big trust funds waiting for us, and so had to work for our livings. The kids at the party, by contrast, had grown up believing that they were presiding over the decadent decline of their families, and, without the grit to compete academically with the aspirants and strivers, ended up chasing the depravity sweepstakes. The Coors Light, the weed in the crotch, the coke in the bathrooms, the banter about slutty waitresses: These were all self-conscious signals that they knew that they represented families and fortunes on their downswing, and that they were determined to live that decline to the fullest.

The culture I glimpsed in that apartment is now playing out on gossip pages and TV screens. America has become rather suddenly obsessed with the antics of young, wayward socialites who dance topless on nightclub tables and pose shamelessly for publicity cameras at every Hollywood premiere and Manhattan after-party. There are near-daily updates about Lionel Ritchie's daughter Nicole trying to quit heroin and getting into fights at New York nightclubs; Johnson & Johnson heiress Casey Johnson indulging in plastic surgery and getting into fights at the same nightclubs; and Paris Hilton doing virtually everything and anyone. (Last

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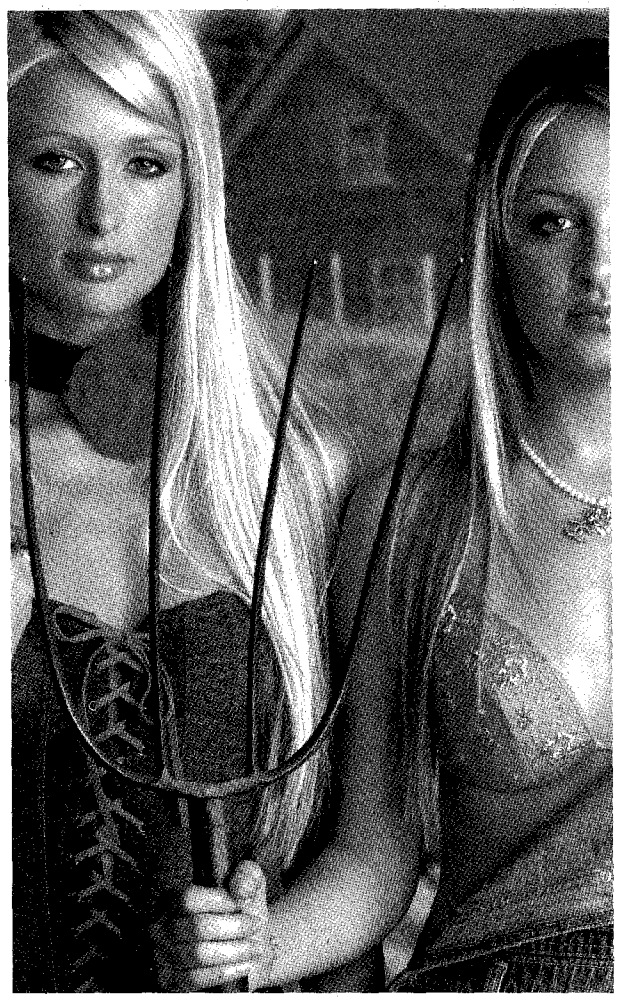
November, millions of Internet-capable Hilton fans had the pleasure of watching a home video of Paris and a then-ex-boyfriend having bored, flamboyant sex—in one magnificent moment, she demands that he pull out so she can answer her cell phone.)

Those who wish for an even closer look—if that's possible—at the lives of our decadent elites can now choose from three documentary programs dedicated to exploring the psychologies of the young and extremely wealthy. The most successful, ratings-wise, has been Fox's show "The Simple Life," billed as a non-fiction version of "Green Acres," which sends Paris Hilton and her best friend, Nicole Ritchie, to spend two months on an Arkansas farm. MTV has "Rich Girls," which documents the shopping-and-sentimentality-heavy summer before college of New York heiresses Ally Hilfiger and Jamie Gleisher. Then there's *Born Rich*, a documentary which debuted at Sundance this summer and is now showing on HBO, in which a 24-year-old heir (Jamie Johnson, of the Johnson & Johnson fortune) interviews more than a dozen of his friends, all also heirs, about growing up very rich. They talk about everything from the cut of a fine suit to the blind chance of their social station to, defensively, the need to set up safeguards like prenuptial agreements to protect their fortunes from too-quick erosion. The nation's current super-elite, one and two generations removed from the middle classes, understands that class status rests on the thin ice of dumb luck.



Paris Hilton and Nicole Richie in "The Simple Life," courtesy of Fox

Decadence amongst the inheritance class is nothing new. It has been a repeated literary theme from Prince Hal in Shakespeare's *Henry IV* cycle to Sebastian Flyte in Evelyn Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited*. But there have been several cultural shifts in recent years that explain why we're seeing so much dissolute wealth in our pop culture. The inheritance class, following the two biggest economic booms in American history, is bigger than it has ever been. At the same time, the children of this class, for all their financial advantages, now operate with a profound aspirational disadvantage. Quite simply, it has become harder and harder for them to find something useful and rewarding to do with their lives.

In previous generations, children of the super-rich had respected slots at the top of certain American institutions set aside for them. After an all-but-guaranteed education at Ivy League schools, they could expect to work at family-owned corporations, or investment banks to which their fathers had ties. They would serve on the boards of foundations and other charitable organizations, and by dint of their wealth, would host parties, salons, and other social gatherings that would get them written up in the newspapers. Today, these slots are no longer reserved for the children of the rich but are open to competition, and that competition is fierce. Legacy status guarantees only a few points on a Harvard application. Shareholders have little patience with sinecured executives who don't perform. Even high society in New York and Los Angeles is no longer dominated by heirs but by professional publicists, club promoters and pop celebrities who throw the most glamorous and coveted parties, to which the Vanderbilts and Rockefellers try to wrangle invitations.

As meritocratic competition has expanded upwards, undermining the sheltered workshops that once gave rich kids outlets for their energies, the mentality of these heirs has changed. For better or worse, they've internalized meritocratic values, which are really just broad American values—in particular, a disregard for status gained by dint of one's birth rather than by virtue of one's talent. This disregard manifests itself in various forms of self-loathing, apparent in almost every scene of shows like *Born Rich* and "Rich Girls." This generation of rich kids is perhaps the most unhappy in history. And their peculiar predicament has prompted an *en masse* attempt to experience, in ways both admirable and depraved, what life is like outside the bubble of their privilege.

Park Avenue mom

One of the reasons that these shows are appealing and have been successful is that they give the viewer a chance to sneer at these loopy, out-of-touch, dysfunctional rich people. But that doesn't explain the appeal entirely. The chance to sneer might keep viewers tuned in for an episode, but likely not a season. The reason people are watching may very well be that the characters are simply more sympathetic and interesting than the shows' publicity make them out to be.

Born Rich is the most self-consciously literary and also the

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best of these programs. In interviews, Johnson, the film's director, has said that his goal was to document the "voodoo" of inherited wealth, the pathologies and stunted ambitions of growing up very rich. Because Johnson is an heir himself, he gets a rare level of candor and depth from his interview subjects, who are also frequently his friends. Some of them, like the textile heir Cody Franchetti, are interested mostly in detailing the prerogatives of vast wealth—the great suits, the fab polo horses. Others are more thoughtful and complex, like Johnson's childhood friend Josiah Hornblower, an heir to the Whitney and Vanderbilt fortunes who took two years off from college to work as a machinist in the Texas oil fields, and, improbably, Donald Trump's daughter Ivanka. The collective portrait that emerges from these more intelligent rich kids is one of guilt and unease. They're a little bit embarrassed by being so wealthy and have a powerful, discomforting suspicion that their station has restricted the options open to them.

This theme runs through these shows, expressed sometimes in touching, sometimes ludicrous ways. There is a moment, majestic in its own way, in the second episode of "Rich Girls," the one in which Jamie, the unattractive, sad and shallow rich girl, slumps against a big wood staircase in someone else's house and gives the camera a look of impossible fury because the boy she thinks is cute is kissing another girl five feet away. To viewers, this is ludicrous: The boy is far more attractive, mature and intelligent than Jamie, way out of the league, and, besides, the girl is his girlfriend—and Jamie can't compete with her either. But Jamie's frustration is positively making her quiver. Three episodes later, she's still talking about the same event.

Part of her frustration stems from a rich girl's sense of frustrated entitlement, an inevitable coming to terms with an object she wants but can't have. But there is something more complex going on here, too, which lends the show its propulsive tragic theme. We know from her previous conversations and escapades that Jamie is beginning to see her life as a closed loop. She knows she is not a success at school. She tells us that she knows her tastes are juvenile and that she is far more spoiled, dependent, and immature than other kids her age. And she knows, too, that she is no great shakes at romance, being unattractive to most of the young men in her circle. Everything she is likely to have, she tells the camera and her friends again and again, comes down to the money she was born into. The dominant image of an inescapable future, for Jamie, is the Park Avenue Mom, spending her days walking her dog, talking on the phone and doing little else with her life. Jamie knows this is not a satisfying life, she tells Ally in the second episode, but she believes that's what she'll become.

The rich kids interviewed in *Born Rich* and shown on "Rich Girls" have, far more than any other children I know, a painful awareness of the trajectory of their lives, and the stereotype of their social station. They know how rich kids are typecast: lazy, ineffectual, their wealth and family name the only source of their success. And so each time they fail at ventures which are not dependent on their wealth or family name, even when they are ventures that anyone would fail at, like trying to date someone far out of your league who already has a girlfriend, they become more convinced that they are bound to enact that stereotype, that there is no way out. When they embrace that stereotype, they become like the heirs I met through my college girlfriend, passionlessly trumpeting the details of their decadence. This tension is what gives these shows their edge, and the characters their vulnerability and their humanity: Their stories are pitched by the television networks as comedies, but to the rich kids themselves they are living classic tragedies, trying, and usually failing, to find a way to deny the inevitability of a sneered-at existence.

Surfing in Biarritz

For those rich kids smart and aware enough to recognize it, these can be debilitating circumstances. It's the dilemma suffered by a close friend of mine, the only super-rich kid I knew growing up. His parents, both born in India, weren't socially prominent in the same gossip-pages way as parents of the kids from these three programs, but they were just as rich and successful, and his ancestors have been among India's wealthiest families for centuries. My friend also had something most of these heirs don't: a vital and active mind. I remember in particular an astoundingly clever and quick, off-the-cuff interpretation of his, from our twelfth grade European history class, of how Gladstone and Disraeli might have debated the merits of incorporating former Soviet states into the European Union. In a class full of grinds that sent more than eighty kids on to Ivy League schools each year, he finished first, effortlessly, and sailed through Harvard with equal ease.

But, out of school, starter jobs in every profession weren't glamorous enough, paid too poorly, and were generally just much less exciting and relevant and cool than the way he had been living his life so far. What he really ought to have done was go to grad school, but the life of a young academic simply had no pull for him: Why would he want to spend fifteen years working at some state school in the Midwest, grading bad papers and teaching uninterested students, when even if he never worked a day after college he could spend his time eating at the finest restaurants in New York with the most glamorous people and boating on the weekends in Long Island Sound? He made a few half-hearted stabs at investment banking (what his father, raised equally rich, had done), but didn't have the interest or energy to compete with the kids whose whole lives depended on how fully their work pleased the managing director. He spent a few months working on a start-up in L.A., but found he had little interest in the busier parts of small business work, and passed his weeks contriving to spend his weekends in Rome and driving up and down the Pacific Coast Highway in rented Lamborghinis.

Soon my friend was back in New York. For a while, he tried to give in to the prerequisites of the born rich, tried to set himself up as a social mover-and-shaker in New York, out every night, spending a thousand dollars a pop to get a booth and bottles of booze for his crew at clubs. His credit card bills averaged twenty thousand a month. He wasn't particularly successful at this either: He had spent his life cultivating a patrician manner and approach to things, and to be success-

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ful in New York, even at going to parties, demands a scrappy, working-class energy. He furthermore ran up against a sort of immovable fact: Celebrity and energy are far more important than simple cash in throwing the hottest parties, making it on the club scene. I was working as a newspaper reporter in Philadelphia at the time. He would call me from New York around midnight on Tuesday and Wednesday nights, so excited, and tell me to meet him at a particular club. "Dude," I'd say, "I live in Philadelphia, remember? I can't meet you in Tribeca tonight." When I did see him, he'd spend the evenings telling me how insincere his new friends in New York were, and then, very late, we'd go back to his parents' gorgeous apartment, where he lived, and he'd tell me long stories about Indian history, and linguistics. He was doing worse and worse, seesawing back and forth between a kind of tragic desperation and a forced come-what-will bonhomie. I once got a call from him before I went to work: "I am observing the surfing at Biarritz," he said, "and it is very sad." He made a poor romantic.

Someone eventually prevailed upon my friend to go to business school, where he is now. It has been difficult to watch him thrash about while far less talented classmates of ours succeed, and though there are certainly many reasons my friend has had a difficult time of it so far, there is a certain oppressiveness about the fact of his family's vast wealth and success which has colored every choice he has made. Going to grad school or going to work at an investment bank or a newspaper out of college doesn't seem like a sacrifice to most of us, but an opportunity. For my friend, who couldn't hope to earn by working what he had simply in return for existing, it meant giving up a life of nearly unmatchable glamour and excitement. Where I, coming out of college, saw chances everywhere, he saw trade-offs.

Andrew Carnegie's revenge

None of this is meant to excuse the idle rich for being idle. The instinctive response of most viewers to much of what is on offer from these programs is to want to shake these spoiled kids by their shoulders and say, "suck it up and start working at something, like the rest of the world." The popular scorn for the born rich is understandable, the stereotype mostly on target. But this thrashing about, looking for a way out that both my friend and the kids in these shows have gone through does explain in part why this generation of rich kids differs from previous ones.

There is a scene in *Born Rich* in which Jamie Johnson asks his buttoned-up father, more or less, what he ought to do with his life. His father, who himself has never worked a day in his life, suggests that Jamie make himself useful by joining some charitable organizations and figuring out how to productively give some of his money away. Jamie presses further: What if he doesn't want to do that, what if he wants to have a career? His father looks confused, then suggests that Jamie could also take up a hobby, "like collecting old maps."

One might think that it ought to be a simple thing for Jamie to take his father's advice about a career in philanthropy. After all, that's how extraordinarily rich young people have long found meaning in their lives, from the Rockefellers to the Fords. And some heirs still do so today, such as John Walton, who inherited the Wal-Mart fortune and used the money five years ago to endow the Children's Scholarship Fund, which each year sends 34,000 poor kids around the country to top private schools, tuition-free. There is no doubt that the social utility of the vastly wealthy resides in their ability to fund, through charitable endeavors, social programs that the government is unwilling or unable to take on. But from interviews in *Born Rich*, it seems that the current generation feels like such efforts are still too much in the bubble, merely another way of piggybacking on your family's accumulated fortune.

It's an understandable feeling, but not good news for society as a whole. Now that we're saddled with the largest, wealthiest, and least-happy inheritance class in America's history, it seems like a good idea for someone to come up with something useful for these people to do with themselves and their money. At the very least, shows like *Born Rich* are good advertisements for a return of the estate tax, which the great philanthropist Andrew Carnegie favored as a spur for the rich to spend their wealth on good works during their lifetimes, rather than lose it to the government.

Uninterested in lives of noblesse oblige, unwilling to compete in the meritocracy, and unable to find satisfaction in merely spending their bequests, rich kids today seem to want nothing more than to escape the bounds of their privilege. This explains, I think, the mass class-mixing that we're seeing on TV—a phenomenon playing out in both good and bad ways. Some rich kids, convinced that they can't break out of the stereotype of decadent decline, are simply trying to live that decline to the fullest, more or less slumming. (Some, like Paris Hilton, take it a half step further, using the public image of the morally lapsed wealthy to leverage a crass and grimy half-fame, living archetypes of rich kids gone to seed.) For others, class-mixing is a real form of education, one that both toughens and tenderizes the world-view of these heirs, who, because of their wealth, have enormous potential for influence. Watching Josiah Hornblower struggle gamely to figure out how to use his wealth for good, you have the distinct sense that his two years in an oil field will prompt him to some sort of socially beneficial action.

And that sense that a well-lived life must include attempts to understand how most people experience the world is one of the heartening themes to emerge from these programs: Whatever else they are, most of these kids have at least the ambition to be in touch with common people. The protagonists in these programs, like my friend, profess a need to be useful—as Ally Hilfiger says, "to do something." They feel like their wealth keeps them locked up and artificially divorced from middle-class people with whom they have a lot—values and ambitions—in common. Another whimsical, twenty-odd year old rich party-boy, George W. Bush, found his public calling after comprehending, in part through his religion, just how much he was like everyone else. A feeling of frustration, and sympathy with the masses, may be a useful start. ◆

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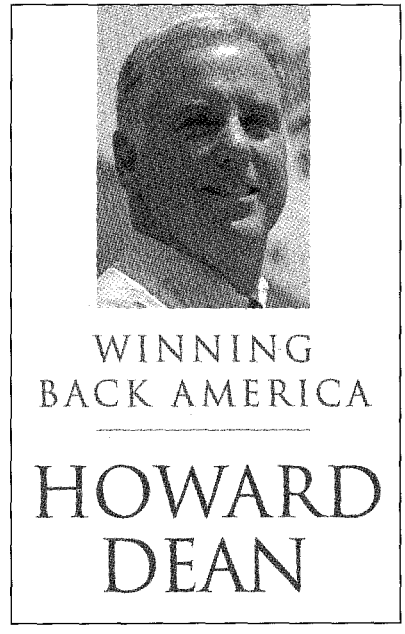
Refried Dean

Why the Democratic front-runner is more like Bill Clinton than George McGovern.

By Stephanie Mencimer

No story about Democratic presidential candidate Howard Dean these days seems complete without the obligatory quote from some Democratic Party insider that Dean is, simply, unelectable. Whether it's his support for civil unions while governor of Vermont, his opposition to the war in Iraq, or his vow to represent "the Democratic wing of the Democratic party"—a shot across the bows of party centrists—detractors say Dean is too liberal to win the hearts of swing voters in an evenly divided nation, and could even provoke an electoral debacle comparable to George McGovern's 49-state loss in 1972. Indeed, those sharing this view run from the Democratic Leadership Council, whose leaders blasted Dean in a memo last May as the candidate of the "McGovern-Mondale wing" and the "elitist, interest-group liberalism," all the way to McGovern himself who, *The New York Times* reported in November, sees in Dean's candidacy "echoes of his own." But reading through Dean's new book, *Winning Back America*, one begins to sense that it is another former Democratic candidate who has left the deepest imprint on Dean: Bill Clinton.



Winning Back America
By Howard Dean
Simon & Schuster, $11.95

It's true that, on a purely biographical plane, Dean and Clinton have little in common. Clinton was a meritocrat who began life as a poor white kid in Arkansas with an alcoholic stepfather and ended it as the first Democrat to win a second term since Harry Truman. Dean is an East Coast brahmin with a privileged upbringing which he doesn't even bother to attempt to minimize. His story starts in a tony Long Island suburb, and he writes frankly about his family of achievers and his time in prep school and then at Yale, where he loafed around as an unfocused student, conceding that he's no Horatio Alger, but making up for his lack of childhood poverty by asserting that he was born thrifty. (You've probably already heard how cheap he is, and how he still wears a suit he bought at J.C. Penney for $125 in 1987.) We also find a few interesting personal revelations, such as his decision to become a teetotaler after getting married. (He hasn't had a drink in 22 years.) By far the most compelling is Dean's description of losing his brother, who was kidnapped and murdered by revolutionaries in Laos in 1974. Dean traveled to Laos in 2002 to visit the site where his brother's body was thought to have been buried and worked with a bucket brigade that was excavating various sites looking for POW remains. He writes that the experience diffused his longtime anger at his brother, whom he realized had been seduced by a beautiful and beguiling country.

Yet it's telling how much of the book consists of rebuttals of his critics, many of whom see Clinton as the only possible model for a

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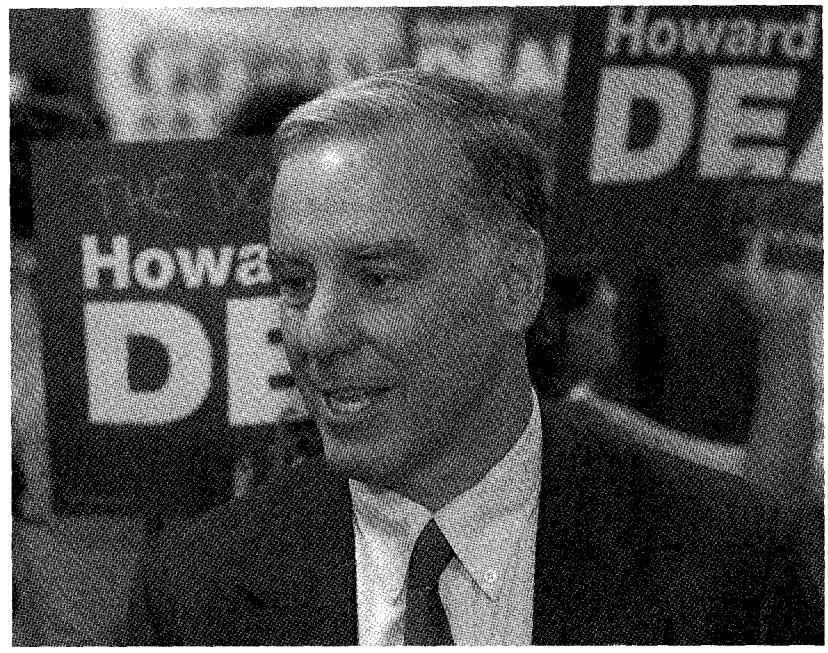
presidential success in 2004. Dean goes out of his way to hype his college classes in international relations and his travels to 50 countries to shore up his foreign policy bona fides—an inoculation against George W. Bush's executive experience, of course, but also a reminder that Clinton's presidency raised the bar for Democratic candidates' experience and interest in this area. To counter criticism that he can't personally connect with black voters—one of Clinton's great strengths—Dean protests, perhaps too much, "I had two African-American roommates my freshman year."

Then there are Dean's criticisms of his party, which bring to mind Ralph Nader's and are often taken by Dean-watchers as a direct criticism of Clinton himself. "With a strategy of always moving to the center, always sounding like Republicans, Democrats have made it possible for George W. Bush to move so far to the right he's become the most radical president in our lifetime," Dean argues. "By being afraid to stand up to the Republicans and their radical agenda, the Democrats have actually empowered the radical right. We've voted for the Republican agenda half the time in the belief that this somehow allows us to straddle the place where the votes are. But I don't think the voters want George W. Bush's policies. I don't think they want me-tooism, either."

But once you've moved on to the second half of the book—which is almost pure policy paper—Dean's critique of "me-too-ism" begins to feel like a rhetorical sop to the liberal activists who have flocked to his campaign from the start. Here, one becomes reacquainted with the centrist positions that defined Dean's governorship, from his fierce advocacy of balanced budgets to support for gun rights. The section which discusses how the Bush administration has shifted the tax load from wealth to labor is lifted straight from the playbook of Dean's rival Sen. John Edwards's (D-N.C.)—a playbook largely written up by centrist policy experts affiliated with the DLC. (It's also worth noting that Dean's book makes no mention of an issue that has been of so much concern to his fellow physicians over this last year, medical malpractice reform. This is perhaps wise, given that Dean has of late been courting the doctors' nemesis, trial lawyers, as a source of campaign funding.)



Dean clearly loved being governor of Vermont, and the way he writes at length about his accomplishments there is reminiscent of Clinton's long-winded and popular State of the Union addresses where he mentioned every possible program and achievement his administration had undertaken.

Judging from his book, Dean clearly loved being governor of Vermont, and the way he writes at length about his accomplishments there is reminiscent of Clinton's long-winded and popular State of the Union addresses where he mentioned every possible program and achievement his administration had undertaken. Talking up a program he started to provide all state children with health insurance, Dean recalls the impact of the program in Bennington, where a school set up a dentist's office that treated 57 eligible kids in its first month. Six kids who'd never been to a dentist before had to go to the emergency room to have rotten teeth pulled. "One sixth-grader later told his principal he never knew what it felt like not to be in pain," he writes with what seems sincere distress.

Dean also comes off as surprisingly Clintonesque in talking about how much he likes to talk. He clearly relishes getting out of the office and yakking around the kitchen table all night long with constituents and voters on the campaign trail. It's hard to imagine John Kerry doing the same—but meshing with voters was one of Clinton's most magical qualities as a candidate and what made him beloved as a president. Dean's book may not sway too many voters, but the enthusiasm it conveys for connecting with the American people feels genuine. That may be what truly makes him a force to be reckoned with in 2004.

Stephanie Mencimer is a *Washington Monthly* contributing editor.

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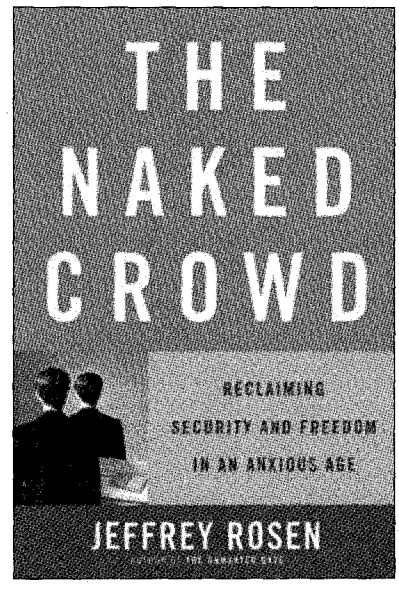
Eyes on the Pries

Why surveillance technology should worry even those with nothing to hide.

By Stephen Pomper

The World Trade Center attacks scared us into buying duct tape and plastic sheeting—and that's just for starters. As Jeffrey Rosen describes in *The Naked Crowd*, fear of future attacks also created a huge demand for new surveillance technologies.

Some of the things under development are quite amazing. For example, there is a biometric face scanner that can pick out known bad guys in a crowd. The Transportation Department is reportedly considering the development of a "dataveillance" program (in Rosen's terminology) that will review travelers' real-estate histories, living arrangements, and similar personal data, so that it can assign them color-coded risk levels—red, green, and yellow. There are fingerprint scanners, iris scanners, and even brainwave scanners somewhere in the pipeline, which can be hooked up to sophisticated databases or lie detectors as the case may be. And up atop the indignity index sits a machine tested by Orlando International Airport that would deliver a buck-naked image of each passenger who wanders under its microwave gaze.



The Naked Crowd: Reclaiming Security and Freedom in an Anxious Age
By Jeffrey Rosen
Random House, $24.95

Are you outraged at the thought? I have to confess that I'm really not. Like many Americans, my first reaction to this James Bond-style technology is to embrace it, in the hopes that someday it will save my skin. As for the intrusion, it hardly bothers me; I figure I have nothing to hide. This is a trusting, optimistic, intuitive view of the world. The question posed by *The Naked Crowd* is whether that view is very smart.

The book seems to have inspired by a challenge posed by Rosen's fellow law professor, Lawrence Lessig, who several years back, called Rosen a technophobic "Luddite" for expressing concerns about the widespread installation of surveillance cameras in Great Britain following the wave of I.R.A. terror in the early 1990s. Lessig suggested that, rather than reflexively resisting the spread of such new technologies, Rosen should pour his efforts into designing a technological and legal approach to surveillance that would protect both security and liberty. In answering this challenge, Rosen concluded that his first order of business should be to persuade skeptics that a balanced approach is actually necessary.

As a skeptic myself, I have to say, he's pretty convincing. Part of the trick here is that Rosen steers almost entirely away from partisan arguments, instead approaching the subject with courteous engagement. (Memo to Hannity, Lowry, Coulter, Moore, Franken, et. al.: You'd be surprised at how far this gets you.) But the bigger trick is in the breadth of Rosen's approach.

Rosen starts with the demand side of the equation, observing that the drive for increasing levels of surveillance is fundamentally driven by public opinion. That's generally consistent with democratic principles—but as a practical matter Rosen argues that this can produce some very bad decision-making. "[P]ublic fear," he writes, "leads people to react to remote but terrifying risks in emotional rather than analytic terms." Borrowing from the work of sociologists and psychologists, Rosen argues that the public doesn't really understand probability or statistics. Instead, it focuses on dramatic images—like a plane crash or collapsing tower—and panics. The government responds in kind by producing regulations that ineffectually address visually memorable past events—for exam-

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ple, by banishing nail clippers from commercial air travel after September 11—while ignoring more significant but ordinary perils like the double fatburger you are about to eat for lunch.

But, the skeptic asks, so what if panic drives us to over-surveillance? Are the costs that great? And aren't there checks and balances to protect us?

The discussion of costs is a particular strength of *The Naked Crowd*. Rather than simply assert that surveillance technologies are "creepy"—the standard fallback of privacy advocates—Rosen lays out the threats that inadequately restrained surveillance can pose, even to those who have nothing much to hide.

Rosen is concerned about the potentially dangerous concentration of information in government hands. He worries that by eroding the old barriers of law and technology that historically discouraged the prosecution of trivial offenses, we will begin to feel like we live in a police state. (This sounds hyperbolic, but if you have ever received a ticket from a stoplight surveillance camera, you know there's some truth to it, at least at the emotional level.) But most of all, he is concerned about the possibility that vast government databases will classify citizens by risk category, and that these classifications will affect our freedom of movement and even our equality of opportunity.

Think about the huge life events and decisions that hang on the strength of your credit rating. Now, what if the government were to give us similar ratings? And what if for some seemingly arbitrary reason (a skinny-dipping citation, a few unpaid parking tickets, or an expired dog license) you wind up in a second- or third-tier classification? In a sense, argues Rosen, "risk profiles extend harms similar to those imposed by racial profiling across society as a whole, creating electronic layers . . . that determine

Most of all Rosen is concerned about the possibility that vast government databases will classify citizens by risk category, and that these classifications will affect our freedom of movement and even our equality of opportunity.

who is singled out for special suspicion by state officials."

That actually sounds worse than creepy. And as Rosen describes the situation, not enough stands between us and that future. For one thing, he argues that the exhibitionist strain in contemporary American culture reinforces popular indifference to privacy. And even though many surveillance technologies could be rendered privacy-friendly with just a little tweaking, he notes that technology companies don't develop them because there is insufficient demand. Finally, he points out that because constitutional doctrine in this area is less far-reaching than one might imagine (the law doesn't demand that a search's scope be proportionate to the severity of a crime, and doesn't recognize any privacy interest in data held by third parties), the courts probably won't, and in Rosen's view shouldn't, get ahead of public opinion as champions of privacy.

This leads Rosen to look toward Congress as the last and best hope for striking an appropriate balance between security and privacy. He would like to see a congressional committee permanently empowered to review executive branch surveillance for effectiveness and intrusiveness. This committee would be charged with investigating alternative technologies which could produce similar benefits with lower privacy costs. In short, it would supply the checks and balances on the government's surveillance powers that are missing in the current system.

This seems like an appealingly sober, balanced, non-hysterical recommendation. If there's a problem with Rosen's analysis, then, it lies in his point-blank assertion that there is no appropriate role for the courts in this area even if Congress fails to act. "The excess of the crowd are the Achilles heel of democracy to which there is and should be no judicial remedy," he asserts.

Well, not exactly. The Constitution was written to ensure that public opinion cannot simply trump certain minority rights unless it is amended through a pointedly burdensome supermajority procedure. And while Rosen makes the good point that judicial law-making in areas like abortion has provoked unfortunate political backlash, it's not at all clear that this situation requires the same interpretive leaps that the Supreme Court made in its reproductive rights cases. Indeed, one would think that there may be some room for leadership by the courts in this area. After all, the Fourth Amendment prohibits "unreasonable searches and seizures," and the Framers did intend it to limit broad, untargeted intrusions into the private sphere. There's also a question about whether public opinion is as polarized on this issue as abortion. As Rozen himself suggests in *The Naked Crowd*, the public may just be poorly informed.

But of course, that's what makes Rosen's contribution so worthwhile. Drawing on law and science, psychology and sociology, *The Naked Crowd* tells a convincing story about the world we live in, and a cautionary one of the world we may be entering. It is all the more laudable for doing so in a steady, nuanced voice that one hopes will rise above the noise of the crowd.

Stephen Pomper is a lawyer in Washington, D.C.

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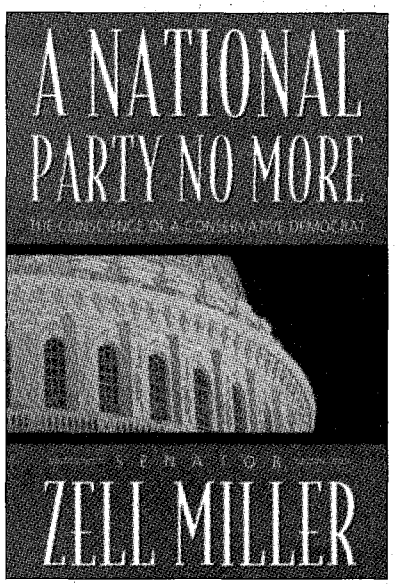
For whom Zell tolls

How not to forge the next Democratic coalition.

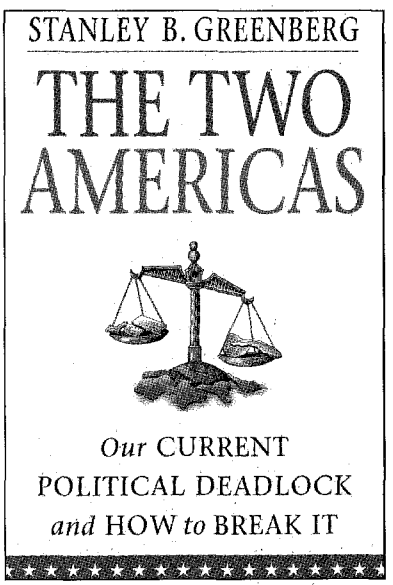
By Ruy Teixeira

These two books have a couple of things in common. Both argue that the Democratic Party needs some fundamental changes, and both invoke the spirit of John F. Kennedy. But they diverge sharply in describing where they want the Democratic Party to go. Stanley Greenberg, a prominent Democratic pollster and consultant who helped guide Bill Clinton to victory in 1992, argues that the Democrats are on the verge of a political breakthrough from the stalemate of "the two Americas." They can achieve that breakthrough, he believes, by advocating a bold program which moves toward the "opportunity society" envisioned by John F. Kennedy. But Sen. Zell Miller (D-Ga.), a former Georgia governor and Democratic apostate, argues that his party is on the verge of a complete meltdown and can only save itself by turning drastically to the right and becoming more like, well, JFK—which in Miller's opinion looks much the same as becoming more like Zell Miller. One thing we know for sure: They can't both be right. Let's try to sort it out, starting with the Miller book.

A National Party No More would be a bit easier to discuss if it was entirely a bad book. But it's not. The first quarter or so, which describes Miller's childhood and his rise in Georgia politics, is really interesting. Talk about retail politics: Here's how Miller, then a college professor, first ran for the Georgia State Senate in 1960 at age 28: "I got up before daybreak to visit the early-rising mountain families around Owl Creek, Gum Log, Scataway, Bugscuffle, Bearmeat and the other isolated communities throughout the county. I'd be back at the college by nine o'clock to teach my first class. There was an old custom that if you woke up a man at night, it would emphasize to him just how important you thought his vote was. I woke up dozens. I'd always carry a gun on those excursions because feelings ran high and I traveled alone often on dark, lonely, dirt-rutted roads."



A National Party No More: The Conscience of a Conservative Democrat
By Zell Miller
Stroud and Hall, $26.00



The Two Americas: Our Current Political Deadlock and How to Break It
By Stanley B. Greenberg
Thomas Dunne Books, $25.95

But *A National Party No More* is in most ways a bad book—indeed, a rather dreadful one. Most of the chapters are a toxic combination of corny folkisms, over-the-top jeremiads against fellow Democrats, and wonky recountings of Miller's policy innovations and accomplishments. That makes for some pretty tough slogging, especially given Miller's disjointed prose style, which piles one story or observation on top of another, without a clear narrative structure.

So who would slog through it? Well, probably some of Miller's newfound conservative friends, who would find his observation that "I could probably count on one hand those [environmentalists] in Washington who are real outdoorsmen, the ones who would know the difference between a pine and a poplar, the ones who have, excuse me, ever 'pee'd' in the woods" a trenchant critique of the environmentalist movement. (One expects that the five leading conservatives who provided dust-jacket blurbs—Sean Hannity, Jack Kemp, Lawrence Kudlow, Newt Gingrich, and Robert Novak—also gave it the old college try.) Who else? Perhaps those among the party he still nominally belongs to who wish to figure how on earth he became the GOP's cat's-paw in the Democratic Party. Back in 1992, after all, Miller was a moderate Southern Democrat who declared, in a keynote speech at that summer's Democratic convention, that Bill Clinton was "the only candidate for president who feels our

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pain, shares our hopes." Despite a near-loss during the disastrous 1994 elections, he came back to become one of the most popular governors in the country. When he left Georgia's gubernatorial mansion in 1999, Miller's record included both tax cuts and a widely-lauded college scholarship program. But these days, he can't find any reason to support the Democratic Party no matter what—and can't find any reason to criticize the GOP, no matter how outrageous its behavior.

This pattern emerges in full force in chapter 6, "But Not This Kind of Democrat." Here, he blasts his party for being beholden to "money and the [interest] groups," especially the dreaded labor unions (who backed Miller for governor in 1990), but has nothing to say about Republican ties to business-oriented special interests and business money. Miller is angry that Democrats tried to stop Bush from making some of his appointments because every president "should be able to select his own team," but makes no mention of the GOP's extraordinary efforts to block Clinton's executive and judicial appointments. He is particularly steamed that the Democrats held up President Bush's Homeland Security bill because of concerns about civil service protections, and not at all concerned that the idea was originally proposed by Democrats only to be blocked for months by Republicans in Congress. (He also mentions in passing that Max Cleland lost his Georgia Senate seat in large part because of political fallout from the congressional fight over the bill, but doesn't mention the truly appalling manner in which the GOP attacked Cleland in that campaign, shamelessly linking the triple-amputee war veteran to Osama bin Laden and Saddam Hussein.) Finally, he quotes JFK on the dangers of "party unity" and "what has been committed in its name," noting Kennedy's warning that "the party which in its drive for unity, discipline and success decides to exclude new ideas, independent conduct or insurgent members is in danger." Amazingly, he applies this concept to the heterogeneous and not-terribly-united-Democrats rather than the rigidly ideological and disciplined Republicans.

So what keeps Miller a Democrat, you might ask? Not a great deal, as evidenced by his chapter on—shudder—taxes, "Return to Sender," which rehearses an entire litany of conservative clichés on the subject. This is a chapter anti-tax activist Grover Norquist, he of the "starve the beast" school of good government, would have been proud to put his name on. For Miller, tax cuts are always good. ("I've never seen one too big for me to swallow without water.") It doesn't matter if the rich get most of the tax cuts—after all, the rich pay most of the taxes! If the tax cuts drastically cut the amount of money which government can spend on programs, well, that's fine, since government would just waste the money anyway. Government is always inefficient and corporations are always efficient—anyone remember Enron?—so the more money we give to business the better. Besides, Jack Kennedy cut taxes.

Oddly, Miller seems quite committed to big programs in education, especially universal pre-school and universal access to college, two policies to which he attached his name as a governor in Georgia. But he's indifferent to the fact that starving the government of money for things you don't like also starves it of revenue for the programs you do like. And given that President Bush can't seem to find the dough to fund his own education reform, it's remarkable that he is so confident that his GOP friends will have the appetite for two huge new entitlement programs.

But why should they worry about what Miller wants anyway? He's a cheap date. He's already convinced, for example, that George W. Bush is today's Winston Churchill, holding the line against terror, while Democratic "demagogues" (his word) get in the way of the war effort. Given those views, it doesn't sound like Republicans will need to worry much about Miller's preferences in areas like education. He's likely to support them no matter what they do. And the Democrats shouldn't worry about what he says either; if they followed his advice and became the second anti-government, pro-war party, they'd not only lose the South; they'd lose the rest of the country, too.

Opportunity blocks

If Miller's path is the wrong one, how should the Democrats move forward, starting with the 2004 election and the chance to regain the presidency? That's where Greenberg's book comes in. According to Greenberg, the time is right to move beyond a critique of specific Bush policies to "mount[ing] an assault" on "the entire Reagan project—the idea that tax cuts for the wealthy and enriching the few, and pro-market and corporate policies are really the best way to bring prosperity to the country as a whole." For Greenberg, this means that the Democrats need their own project: dedication to a opportunity-oriented society "where all share in America's bounty," the vision which he believes animated the Democrats of Kennedy's day. These new "opportunity Democrats" or "JFK Democrats," to use Greenberg's buzzwords, can build on the Democrats' strength in their core groups and win over significant sections of swing groups to whom these themes are attractive, thereby breaking the current political deadlock.

This sounds good, if familiar. (Greenberg had similar advice for candidate Clinton in 1992.) And I'd certainly take Greenberg's Kennedy over Miller's Kennedy any day of the week. But how does Greenberg know his approach is the right one? That's both the strength and the weakness of the book. Where Miller favored folk wisdom and personal anecdotes, Greenberg offers a meticulous

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analysis of polling data, particularly those collected by his firm, Greenberg Quinlan Rosner, for an effort called Democracy Corps. These data serve a special purpose for Greenberg, because he can combine a large number of surveys taken between Sept. 11, 2001 and May 2003, creating a massive database of some 15,000 interviews. This allows him to subdivide the electorate into some 22 different electoral groups, without producing groups with ridiculously small numbers of respondents—a common problem in survey research.

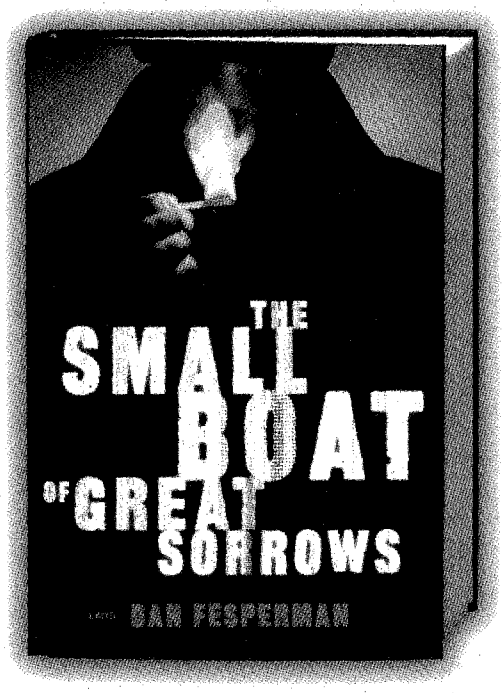
It's not always easy to keep track of the different groups, especially since they tend to overlap quite a bit. ("Golden Girls" are white women over 65, while "Aging Female Blues" are white women over 50 without a college degree; the "Young and Restless," who are whites under 30, can also be "F-You Boys," white, married men under 50 without a college degree). But, if you can put up with that, and with the cutesy names Greenberg insists on giving them, one finds hugely valuable material.

To my mind, Greenberg's analysis of these groups, particularly of the nine groups he places in the "contested political world" (a.k.a. swing voters), establishes a couple of important things. First, he shows convincingly that more traditional Democratic strategies, which range from the "base mobilization" of labor-oriented Democrats to the anti-corporate orientation of populist Democrats to the "reassuring-swing-voters-we're-not-crazy" approach of New Democrats, are unlikely to reach enough voters in these contested groups to create a durable Democratic majority. Second, he demonstrates that the general "opportunity Democrat" themes are, in fact, more attractive and exciting to these swing groups than the traditional approaches.

That's pretty good for one book. Combined with the raw material on the electoral groups, this makes it an invaluable work for those trying to think through where the Democrats should go next. And there's still plenty of thinking left to be done. Most obviously, it's hard to get from Greenberg's polling data to a sense of what the current crop of Democratic presidential candidates would be doing differently if they were following his advice today. Greenberg does provide a list of policy ideas he believes would encapsulate his opportunity approach—from a "family opportunity and security plan" to a "100 percent education opportunity"—but they just don't differ that much from the policies these candidates are currently advocating. What's really needed is the "killer app," so to speak, of being a JFK Democrat. Greenberg doesn't provide that answer and Miller's, of course, is to become a Republican. The floor is open for suggestions.

Ruy Teixeira is a senior fellow at The Century Foundation and the Center for American Progress. His latest book, with John Judis, is *The Emerging Democratic Majority*, which will be reissued in paperback this January.

"A gripping new spy novel" (N.Y. Times) of post-war Bosnia and the war crimes tribunal, of international intrigue and chilling suspense



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The Odd Couple

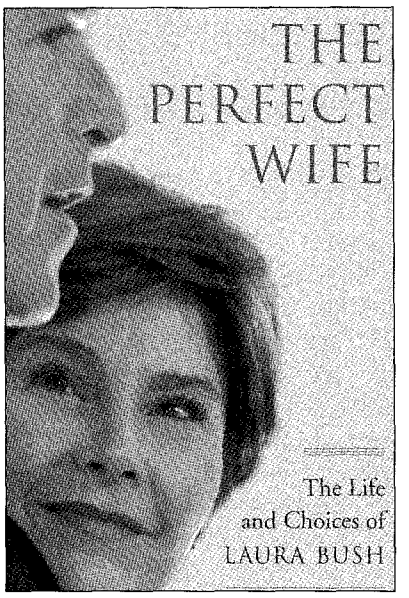
Is Laura too good for George?

By Margaret Sullivan

Consider the curious case of Laura and George Bush, in which the adage that opposites attract is taken to its logical extreme. She is a modest and dignified former librarian, whose best friends are progressive Democrats, and who loves nothing better than to putter in her garden. She is known for her uncanny ability to sit perfectly still in public. He is, well, he's Dubya: the brash hell-raiser, the often-elitist and proudly anti-intellectual conservative Republican whom Americans have come to know and, in some cases, love. Her favorite book is *The Brothers Karamazov*. His is the Bible. In her 20s, she taught in a ghetto school. In his 20s, he was, in his own words, "young and irresponsible." She's fascinated by the world's cultures. He poked fun at a journalist who spoke French to Jacques Chirac.

Washington Post reporter Ann Gerhart's book deftly answers all sorts of questions about this odd couple's relationship. But well-reported and perceptive as it is, her book can't help but leave readers with an unanswerable question: What on earth is she doing with him? Physical attraction is one thing—Gerhart details the "crackling chemistry" between these two attractive people who became engaged only six weeks after their first date, and married only six weeks after that. But don't spouses normally have quite a bit more in common than the same junior high school in Midland, Texas?

The Perfect Wife is a short, breezy, guilty pleasure of a book, full of juicy quotes and anecdotes that will remind the reader that its author once wrote the *Post*'s "Reliable Source" gossip column. Gerhart clearly admires Laura Bush, whom she has covered since 2001. She praises her warmth, sincerity, intelligence, and loyalty. But this is no valentine to the First Lady. Gerhart offers an unflinchingly clear-eyed view of her subject's foibles—never more so than when she describes the permissive, love-blinded parenting that has produced two of the worst-behaved offspring the White House has ever seen. Gerhart portrays the Bush twins, Jenna and Barbara, as careless young women who have used their Secret Service agents to tote their bags and arrange meetings with celebrities, when they aren't trying to elude their protection altogether. "These girls have all the noblesse and none of the oblige," is Gerhart's pithy assessment.



The Perfect Wife: The Life and Choices of Laura Bush
By Ann Gerhart
Simon & Schuster, $23.00

Over and beyond the engaging portrait of Laura Bush and family offered here, there emerges a vexing question: How far into the post-feminist age are we going to continue this First Lady business, anyway? Isn't it absurd to think that the most theoretically capable leader in the land—supposed to be highly intelligent, intellectually curious, thoroughly modern in every way—will have a spouse whose best skills are an adoring gaze and a knack for showing off Christmas decorations?

Given that America is now a place where, for instance, more women than men apply to medical school, this problem was waiting to happen. We saw it play out last time with Hillary Rodham Clinton in the White House. Recall the Clintonian promise of a two-for-one presidency, the health-care reform debacle, and the resulting operative phrases: too smart for her own good, doesn't know her place, who does she think she is? Hillary's act didn't play well with many Americans, but at least we got an honest look at the inherent difficulties of First Ladyhood in the dual-career society. And Hillary, the last time we checked, didn't seem to have been much daunted by the rage she generated among traditionalists. (And maybe we'll find, someday, that the idea of a former president as First Gentleman finally puts this issue to rest.)

Meanwhile, in Laura Bush, we have someone who appears—at first glance—to be the anti-Hillary: a prim helpmeet who has buried all evidence of independent thought in order to give complete support to a husband whose beliefs, in many cases, are direct opposites of her own. The problem is that Laura Bush, as Gerhart makes clear, is much more than that caricature. She is a strong, independent, thoughtful woman with plenty of her own ideas which she cannot, or does not, articulate. That can get dicey at times, as when this passionately committed champion of books and privacy sits by, wordless, as the nation's librarians protested the intrusiveness of the Bush administra-

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tion's Patriot Act.

Whatever that kind of accommodation may be doing to Laura Bush's psyche (and she's not about to tell), this arrangement works beautifully for her husband. In his words, "I have the best wife for the line of work I am in. She doesn't try to steal the limelight." And another time: "Laura is the perfect complement to a camera hog like me." So, when she's in her official capacity, she simply takes her intelligence underground. At times, the results are poignant—and, to Gerhart, disturbing.

"As I watched Laura Bush in those first months moving through her public events, I noticed how much more animated and commanding she was when acting solo. When she traveled with the president, she faded to background. It made me wince..." And she also observed that when Laura Bush spoke in her official capacity or about her relationship to the president, she reverted to simple sentences, reminiscent of the Dick-and-Jane primers. On her initial impressions of her future husband: "I thought he was fun. I also thought he was really cute. George is very fun. He's also slightly outrageous once in a while in a very funny and fun way, and I found that a lot of fun."

But when she talked about books, or libraries, or education—her passions—her sentences grew far more complex. They became those of an accomplished grown-up.

Is it reasonable to believe that thinking 21st century women will keep playing this strange role for eight years (or even four)? Is it still acceptable for an American institution to insist, however implicitly, that a woman's survival in her "job" include near-complete sublimation of her ideas? Is this only a problem when husband and wife are such wildly different people?

Gerhart quotes Hillary Clinton on the subject: Being First Lady "is really a complicated calculation. It's very difficult." And as gender roles grow farther and farther removed from the Mamie Eisenhower model ("Ike runs the country and I turn the lamb chops"), it's not going to get any easier.

Margaret Sullivan is an editor of *The Buffalo News*.

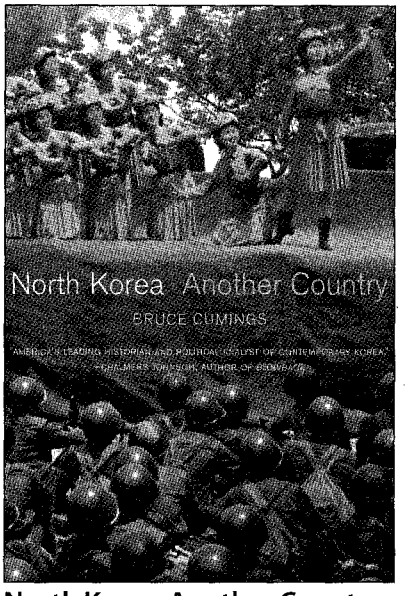
Pacific Hieroglyphic

What the Bush administration doesn't know about North Korea.

By Soyoung Ho

Smart diplomacy has always required an empathetic understanding of the adversary's point of view as well as a clear-eyed sense of one's own interests—and using the latter to advance the former. But it can be hard to get the balance right. Too much empathy and one becomes captive to the rival's agenda. Too little, and one makes dumb mistakes.

Exhibit A of the latter danger is the Bush administration's decision in December 2002 to suspend fuel-oil shipments to North Korea after learning that the regime was secretly enriching uranium. The administration hardliners who pushed the decision had little specialized knowledge of the Korean Peninsula; but according to *The Washington Post*, they had been convinced by reports from a single defector that North Korean leader Kim Jong Il's hold on power was shaky, and that his regime might collapse if the United States stood tough. The defector turned out to be unreliable, and the North Koreans reacted with a heedless fury that anyone who knew anything about that regime could have predicted. They expelled international inspectors who had been monitoring plutonium from a nuclear facility shuttered in a deal brokered by the Clinton administration, and subsequently withdrew from the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty. This plutonium gave Kim the ability to make nuclear



North Korea: Another Country
By Bruce Cumings
The New Press, $24.95

weapons quickly (the uranium route would have taken years), and indications are that he has now done so. Meanwhile, the Bush administration, having vowed not to negotiate with North Korea, is now doing just that—though it will be difficult even to get matters back to where they stood last year (with Pyongyang's plutonium under international lock and key).

This time, administration negotiators might want to pick up a copy of *North Korea: Another Country* by University of Chicago scholar Bruce Cumings. Though he falls into the trap of feeling too great an empathy, Cumings

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is one of the few American experts who read Korean and possess a deep, sophisticated grasp of modern Korean history and culture. Hence, his book is full of insights that help explain *why* Pyongyang behaves as it does—and possible clues to how to make it behave better.

Perhaps the book's biggest revelation, one little known even to most Western historians of the region, is the depth of the suffering visited on North Korea by the Korean War. Cumings describes the ferocious and sustained air campaign that virtually leveled the entire country and took millions of civilian lives. Cumings details horrific effects of fire bombings on a man he encountered in 1968 in South Korea: He "had a peculiar purple crust on every visible part of his skin ... He was bald, he had no ears or lips, and his eyes, lacking lids, were a grayish-white, with no pupils ... I did not know ... that this purplish crust resulted from a drenching with napalm, after which the untreated victim's body was left to somehow cure itself." The public's memory of this real and rather recent devastation, plus its profound awareness of the peninsula's long record of brutal invasion over the past seven centuries, help sustain support for, or at least compliance with, the regime and its policies. The ability to manipulate these public memories is one reason why the regime may be less prone to collapse than the hawks predicted. The regime has so far maintained its governing system with total isolation unprecedented in world history, in part by cunningly and ruthlessly indoctrinating its people. Cumings vividly captures the doctrine of *juche* or self-reliance whose insane obsessiveness breeds the pathological isolationism we see. This is further reinforced by the North Koreans' fear that the South and its allies will not hesitate to use nuclear weapons against them—a belief accentuated by Bush's inclusion of North Korea as part of the "axis of evil."

With so little information coming out of the hermit kingdom, policymakers and the American media tend to spin those few hints we do get into narratives that reinforce the craziness that all glimpses of North Korean behavior suggest to outsiders. For example, American media profiles of Kim Jong Il portray him as a pudgy, five-foot-nothing hereditary dictator with a perm and a taste for tall Swedish blondes, French wine, and haute cuisine. Cumings paints quite a different picture. "Kim is a homebody who ... doesn't drink much, works at home in his pajamas, scribbling comments in the margins of the endless reams of documents brought to him in gray briefcases by his aides ... He is prudish and shy, and like most Korean fathers, hopelessly devoted to his son and the other children in his household." In truth, both the media and Cumings are probably right, though neither one captures the entire picture. Korean society—North and South—has long allowed men of means to live double lives as both doting fathers and carousing womanizers. South Korea, for instance, is packed with room salons—ultra expensive (tabs can run up to $1,500 for two) deluxe bars with private rooms, where wealthy or powerful men, single and married alike, relax after a hard day's work in the company of attractive young women, drinking, singing, and dancing. Corporate Korea patronizes these salons to win contracts as standard business practice. The escapades are a form of patriarchy, men's rule over women, dominant in East Asian cultures. Kim, in this sense, is just behaving like a typical Korean male hotshot.

Rod Coddington

North Korean leader Kim Jong Il

For all of his insights, however, Cumings—who professes empathy for the underdog—has written an apologia for a regime that brutalizes its citizens, is openly hostile to the United States and South Korea, and heedless of international law. In particular, although he does not condone Kim Jong Il's gulag, Cumings discusses a system of family support at labor camps that allows prisoners to survive. But can one gloss over systematic executions, distorted food rations that exacerbate starvation, and perverted idolatry of its leader? The trick for wise policymakers reading *North Korea: Another Country* is to look past the apologetics in order to glean valuable insights that can't be found in memos from administration hawks who make ignorance about the world a virtue.

Soyoung Ho is an editorial assistant of *The Washington Monthly*.

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Paper Boy

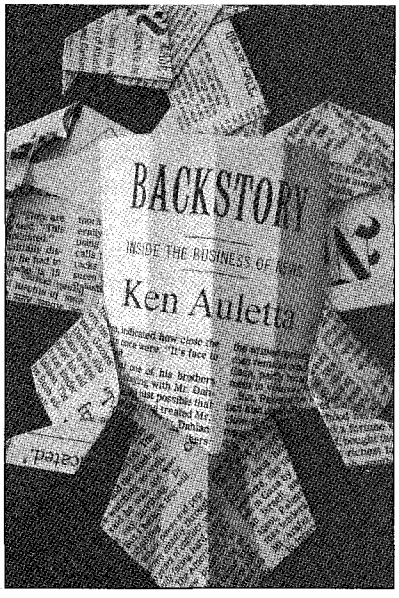
Ken Auletta's Gotham-centric musings on the media.

By James Warren

One can safely wager that Roger Ailes, the remarkably successful uberfuhrer of FOX News, frowns on Ken Auletta, media writer for *The New Yorker*. In a revealing portrait of Ailes and FOX included in *Backstory*, Auletta captures the metaphysical absurdity of their "We Report, You Decide" marketing mantra and lures the brainy, combative boss to rail about stuffy,self-righteous, liberal-dominated media elites at the very time Auletta gently disdains Fox in a manner common to self-righteous, liberal members of the media elite. He even lets a Fox competitor, CNN's Aaron Brown, whom Ailes scornfully lampoons on air for resembling a dentist, get the last, and negative, word. Ouch.

That both would talk to Auletta is no surprise since the reporter's Larry King aplomb in drawing A-listers into his interrogations is the hallmark of an author's effective, unthreatening modus operandi which, (and I speak having submitted to it myself), appears to have been learned at the Brian Lamb School of Interrogation. Diligence and a poker face have served him in good stead, as one is reminded in what is largely a compilation of revealing *New Yorker* stories of the past decade.

Indeed, one of the oldest, a 1993 look at changes at *The New York Times* under a then-new publisher, Arthur Ochs Sulzberger Jr., may be more insightful now than at the time. Auletta takes us on a journey through the paper's attempt to shake up a hidebound culture and improve internal communication, replete with touchy-feely retreats for executives of the nation's premier news organization. A task force had even been assembled to democratize the institution and alter a fear-laden, top-down culture. In light of the Jayson Blair episode, which at the very least revealed that the hierarchy's monarchical top was insulated against admonitions from below essentially to "stop this guy before he kills!," it would appear that very little was learned.



Backstory-Inside the business of news

By Ken Auletta

The Penguin Press, $24.95

It's the same with a wonderful 1994 recitation of the "fee speech" which is a fixture of a top sliver of the Washington press, with four-and-five figure speaking fees common for stars and hacks alike, assuming the latter regularly appear on television. Cokie Roberts, Robert Novak, Mark Shields, William Safire, Tim Russert, Fred Barnes, Chris Wallace, Morton Kondracke, Wolf Blitzer, Gloria Borger, the list went on and on and on, back then, and the buck-raking is unabated today. Shaking his head all the way, Auletta heard the strained, "I'm not an elected official" defense, which is matched by the "I don't say anything any different than I would on the air or my column." It's situational ethics run amok, a straining to justify unadulterated greed and ethical conflicts generated by first-class airfares and chauffeured sedans to and from the airport. It's no less unseemly than the craving of well-known reporters and anchors to gain the good will of radio's Don Imus, a symbiosis Auletta details in another piece, where he catches the opinion-flinging journalists' scripted "ad-libs" and frequent disdain for those they cover, all to the pleasure of the cannily manipulative Imus, puppeteer of newsies craving designation as hip.

Not all of Auletta's best evinces old but timeless quality, since he tracks developments of distinctly recent vintage, notably the coming of the Internet and the Keystone Kops hunt for instant riches. His account of the creation of what was originally called InsideDope.com (later Inside.com), envisioned as "a must-read online site for members of the cultural elite," is a New York-based saga of unadulterated hubris and wasted millions, on a par with any from Silicon Valley's golden age. It also comes with an important lesson about trying to sell content on the Internet: namely that getting online subscriptions remains a vexing challenge for entrepreneurs and Big Media alike. As one investor with an uneven track record tells the author, "The mentality of the information seeker is: I can find it if I

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keep looking. Why should I pay for anything? That's the phenomenon that has not been overcome with time." And make no mistake, it remains a phenomenon to make boardrooms and newsrooms tremble.

And, yet, for all the alluring insights into big players and issues provided here, there is also a certain claustrophobia both in subject matter and approach. It's the media world as seen from Manhattan and its consequent fixation on *The New York Times* and its internal politics rather than the day-to-day operations of huge Gannett or Knight-Ridder chains; the never-ending battle between New York's tabloid *Post* and *Daily News* rather than the truly high-stakes confrontation between cable and satellite television operators; and a profile of Imus rather than hard scrub of the radio goliaths who have stripped bare local stations and homogenized so much of what we hear. It is indicative of the woeful state of elite media coverage in general that one sees virtually nothing about the prime source of news for most of us, namely local television stations, with their two, three and even four hours of newscasts each day. For most Americans, Tom Brokaw, Dan Rather, and Peter Jennings are far less influential links to the outside world than the likes (in Chicago) of local anchors Ron Magers, Warner Saunders, and Diann Burns. What kind of job are *they* doing? It would be a true service to offer a systematic, caricature-free analysis of the quality of their newscasts as would be, say, a thorough dissection of Gannett's typical small-circulation newspaper, or a chronicle of what airs on the 13 commercial radio stations in the Quad Cities, which hug the Mississippi River on the Illinois-Iowa state line, now that all are owned by either San Antonio-based Clear Channel Radio or Atlanta-based Cumulus Broadcasting, Inc.

At the same time, the elitism decried by Ailes is in evidence when it comes to the skepticism, verging on outright condescension, which Auletta displays toward any tampering with a church-state divide of news and business or sharing content among different realms of media companies. Thus, the executives who run my giant company "blather endlessly about synergy" and their editors threaten to lose their "keep-your-distance watchdog" role by cooperating with the business side of their operations (this appears in an unflattering piece, dotted with puzzling factual errors, on Tribune Co., in which, nevertheless Auletta treats my days as a Washington bureau chief with great and much appreciated generosity. A prescient 1997 piece on the ham-handed boss of the *Los Angeles Times*, a bottom line obsessive brought in from General Mills and later forced out amid a newsroom scandal, cites a magazine publishers' conference at which "partnerships" with advertisers were encouraged—"Whatever that means," Auletta hurrumphs at the mention of that ominous word.

He is also openly disdainful of market research, here betraying unadulterated naivete. The newspaper industry's many problems most certainly include a traditionally reflexive aversion to marketing and basic research. It operates with woefully small outlays for understanding its customers and hawking the product, spending less than one-half of one percent of its revenues on research—a stunningly low total when compared to the average big-time consumer products company or TV station—and only slightly more on marketing. Precious few industries know, and care to know, as little about what customers think of their daily handiwork.

For sure, broadcast executives may lamentably be enslaved to research, given to changing the wardrobe of anchors or playlists of jocks overnight if viewers and listeners decline. But newspapers' heavy reliance on anecdote is no less troubling, and is surely one reason for the unceasing decline in readership, and lack of interest among

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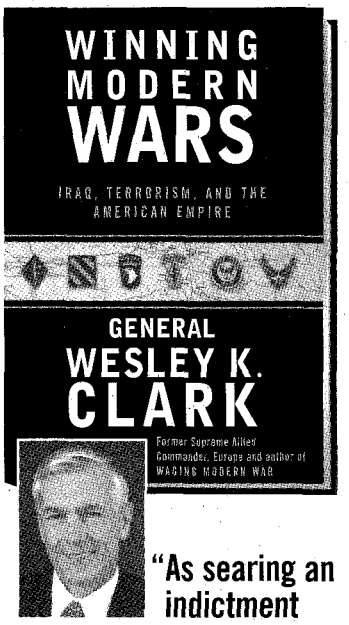

"As searing an indictment of George W. Bush's foreign policy as any tome out there. Clark...homes in on his targets (Bush, Rumsfeld, Wolfowitz, the whole lot of them), and blasts them to bits."
—Fred Kaplan, *Slate*

"A fascinating analysis of the tactics of war and the values that underlay America's mission in this world." —Walter Isaacson

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youth. To devote substantial sums to market research, or fully to understand advertiser concerns are not the unseemly exercises Auletta believes them to be, especially if one genuinely learns from both, rather than becomes their lapdogs (as we all readily concede that television, radio, and many magazines do). A year ago, I created a new Sunday features section for *The Chicago Tribune* and have spent time pitching that section to advertisers. And why not? I know more about the section than any Tribune ad sales executive. Have I offered any editorial deals or hinted that I might alter content to make my interlocutions feel cozier? Not for a second. But my mere presence in a room with a Target executive would seem, in Auletta's eyes, to relegate me to the rabble of amoral hucksters and carnival barkers because I've crossed the Rubicon between journalism and commerce. Hogwash. I'll match my department's ethical strictures with that of any media organization in the land (excepting, I suppose, the saints at C-Span or *Consumer Reports*.)

More and more, media are big businesses. Rather than bemoan the loss of a quaint, and mythicized, past, an observer of the industry, especially one as smart, likeable and connected as Auletta, might put aside the knee-jerk snobbery aroused by any invocation of "synergy" or "partnerships" or "marketing" and come to terms with the essence of what these papers, stations and magazines are actually doing editorially. Some of it is pretty impressive, even if it comes riding sky-high profit margins. *Backstory* is engaging and insightful, and even includes a wonderful portrait of a truly picturesque character, John McCandlish Phillips Jr., who chucked a great newspaper career for a small Pentecostal church group. But one could have set aside certain facile assumptions and drilled deeper. Just like an Aaron Brown—or, I should say, a good dentist.

James Warren is deputy managing editor of *The Chicago Tribune*.

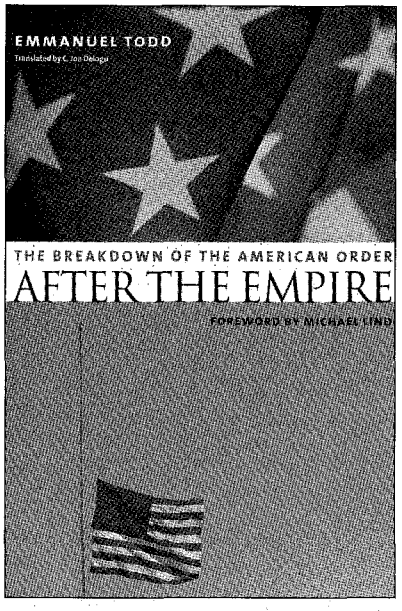
Eiffel Cower

France's answer to the neocons.

By Alexander Kirshner

Emmanuel Todd's *After the Empire* has been a bestseller in France for most of the last year—which should tell you a lot about the book even before you read the first page. In substance and tone, Todd's writing bears a strong resemblance to that of conservative intellectuals, like Robert Kagan, who proclaim the inevitability of American dominance. But Todd's thesis is the exact opposite of the neocons'. Our military aggressiveness is the calling card not of a superpower, but of a waning empire. Todd, who is the kind of French intellectual whose picture hangs in the windows of fancy Parisian bookstores (I know I've seen it), foresees the rise of a new Eurasian power, with France, of course, at its heart.

The United States, Todd contends, is no longer a global economic dynamo. Under the façade of what we have been led to believe as a healthy, high productivity, low-tax, low- inflation economy lies a rotten core. Real industrial production has been replaced by a dependence on vague Enron-like "services." Our trade deficit, which seems to break historical records each quarter, makes our world-famous rates of consumption unsustainable. Further, it makes us dependent on the whims of international financiers who could pull the rug out from under our economy at any moment. We are in, he says, for a massive worsening in



After the Empire: The Breakdown of the American Order
By Emmanuel Todd

Columbia University Press, $29.95

our economic fortunes which will drastically lower our standard of living. Our oversized military thus is a lagging indicator, a sign of our weakness, not strength, and our current aggressive foreign policy stems from our need to hide our vulnerability and to maintain our reputation as, in Secretary Albright's words, "the indispensable power."

In the future, Todd asserts, the real power will rest with Europe. The continent will evolve into an united force and its steadfastly protected industrial base will allow it to rapidly reestablish its military might.

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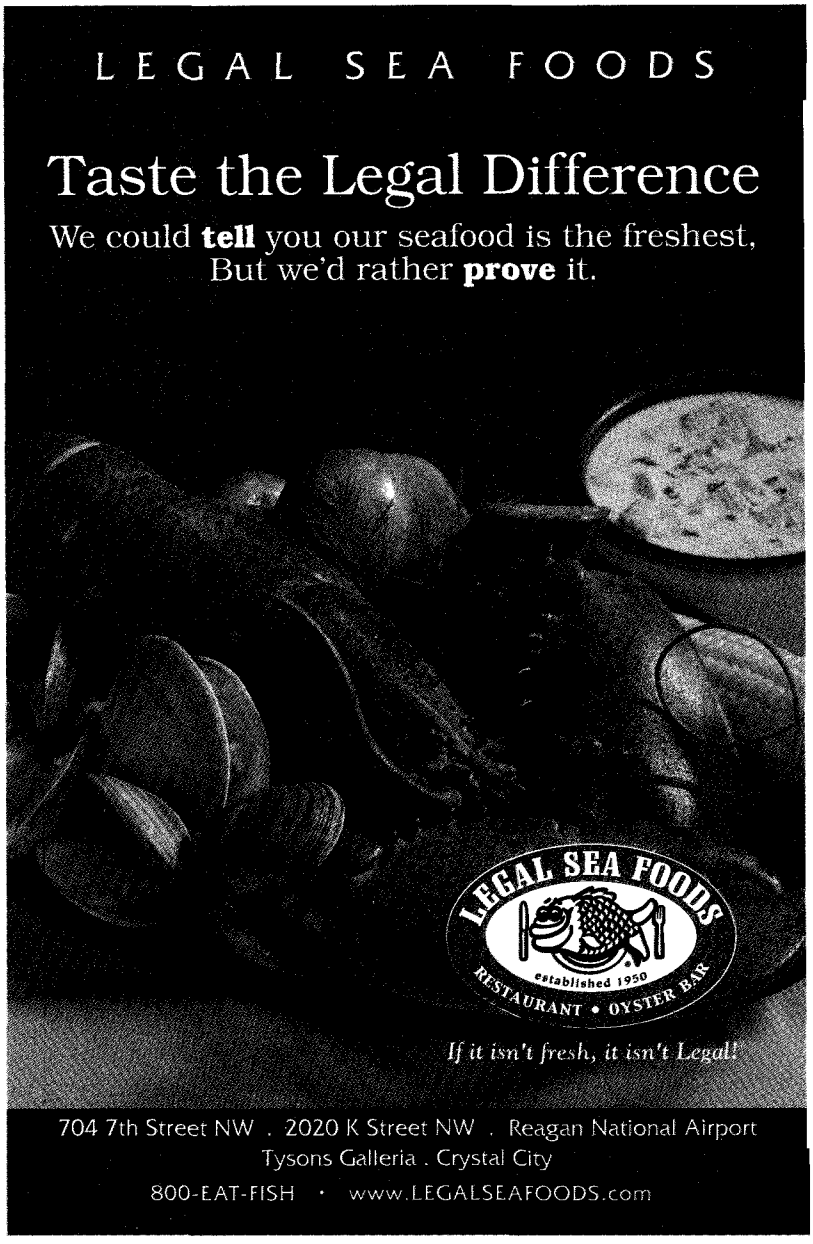
Further, borrowing from former National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski, Todd asserts that Europe benefits from its position at the epicenter of the economic and political world: Eurasia. Over time, Europe's and Russia's cultural affinities will converge. By contrast, the Cold War-era ties which bind the Atlantic world together will be severed because of the vast divide separating "European and American civilizations." Todd's rhetoric reaches a feverish pitch when he refers to the inevitable end of U.S.-European interdependence as "the emancipation of Europe."

With a wide-ranging and self-confident book like *After the Empire*, it is a bit of a challenge to figure out where a critique should begin. Three areas stand out.

First, while it is not outlandish to claim that the foundation of the U.S. economy is not as solid as it once was, Todd's henny-penny economic analysis is a stretch. A $500 billion annual trade deficit is worrying and has contributed to the dollar's recent decline in value. But the United States is not Argentina. Unlike developing countries, we carry our debt in our own currency. A monetary devaluation may slow the U.S. economy, but it does not pose a fatal threat to our economic health. The long-term prospects of the economy are just not as dire as Todd would have us believe.

Second, our unilateralist foreign policy, which Todd argues is inevitably formed by our economic and cultural condition, is more likely (and I am just guessing here) the result of the loss of a couple of hundred votes in Florida. If multilateralists such as Al Gore and Richard Holbrooke were defining U.S. foreign policy, rather than George Bush and Dick Cheney, Todd's claims wouldn't be controversial, they would be laughable.

Third, though Todd's forecast of the rise of an independent Eurasian juggernaut is not implausible—one ought to be prepared to wait for a long time before it comes to pass.



Despite the size of the E.U. economy and its impressive industrial base, Western European nations are not likely to stomach a massive redistribution of funds away from social welfare toward military development. Todd predicates his analysis on the hard won camaraderie between Germany and France. But as the recently collapsed efforts to create a European constitution have demonstrated, the reality of a unified, and muscular, European foreign and military policy is still, at best, a number of years away.

Like the neocons' worldview, Todd's theory combines a wishful vision of the future and nationalistic triumphalism in a way that sidesteps the facts. All of the following are true: The United States depends on foreign capital to sustain its consumption and the rest of the world relies on that consumption to drive its economic growth; the United States is unmatched in its ability to express its military power and is understandably reticent of attacking countries with nuclear capabilities; Europe has invested less in its military and we could still use European troops in Iraq. We and our allies are, in a word, interdependent. That may sound dull and "interdependence" won't sell many books. But unlike the theories of Todd and the neocons, it happens to be true.

Alexander Kirshner is a *Washington Monthly* intern.

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Meanwhile in **America** by Joe Sacco

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Maybe there's more to it than my $4-per-vote calculations. Maybe the economy is recovering, and maybe *that's* why Bush will hold on in 2004. But something tells me that the champagne trickling down from the fountains of the Cheneys won't ever reach Boxcar Bill here. My guess is neither Dean nor any of the others will do much for him either. It's my intervention or nothing.

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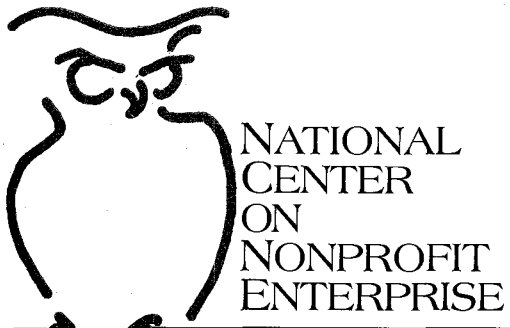

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